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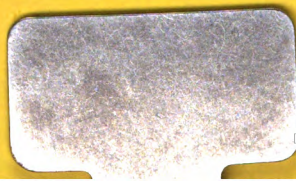
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THE
MOTHER'S
MISTAKE
BY
MRS. ELLIS.

JL



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Helen Clifton.

THE
MOTHER'S MISTAKE.

BY

MRS. ELLIS,

AUTHOR OF "FAMILY SECRETS," "WOMEN OF ENGLAND," ETC., ETC.

"Mark well the youth—in him
You see the man of future years."



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANELAY.

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P R E F A C E.

THE story of the MOTHER'S MISTAKE was originally written under a strong impression that much may be done by parents, and especially by mothers, in the way of assisting their children to discover and pursue that particular course of useful occupation for which, individually, they are *by nature* best adapted.

The views of human nature here taken lead directly to the conclusion that all are not born alike, nor are capable of being made alike by the same educational treatment—that all have natural capabilities and tendencies, which render them, as entire beings, more capable of healthy development and successful action in one position than another; and that to ignore these capabilities, and to run counter to these tendencies, may be to frustrate some of the highest purposes of human existence.

Another important fact which this little story has been written to set forth is, that children themselves are not always the best judges of the requirements of that profession or business to which their crude inclinations may tend; and that they are themselves still less capable of judging of their own natural adaptation for discharging such requirements aright. For the former, a large amount of experience and acquaintance with the world is necessary: for the latter, a knowledge of human nature—of the three great elements of character—the physical, the intellectual, and the moral, and of all these combined, such as no child was ever yet the master of, such as few indeed are ever instructed in; but yet, such as must, by absolute necessity, be taken into account in the great question of fitness or unfitness for filling any responsible situation in life.

If, then, the child, even when verging upon manhood, is himself deficient

in the necessary requisites for arriving at the best decision on this most important point; and if, as is frequently the case, the father has found little opportunity for studying the elements of his child's individual character,—to whom is the appeal to be made for wisdom in counsel, and direction in case of doubt? The step must be taken: the boy will grow into the man. Surely the mother, whose allotted post it was to watch the cradle of her child, and to take note of the awakening of every faculty which could give capability to action, or bias to inclination; whose high privilege it was to mark the unfolding of every petal of her flower which should decide whether it would bloom most sweetly in the garden or the greenhouse, or every bud and branch of her noble tree which should indicate its appropriate place upon the hill or in the valley,—surely the mother might read, in this most interesting book of Nature, some at least of those great truths, which, when rightly considered, are of such essential value in directing to a course of usefulness as well as happiness.

We know that, after all, there is no certainty—no *human* certainty—in these matters; that even the best intentions and the most persevering efforts may fail us in effecting the purpose especially desired. All, therefore, which in the following pages has been attempted, is to show the danger of maternal neglect in this most important portion of a mother's duty—the right knowledge of the true character of her child—a knowledge of its character, intellectually and morally, as close and as intimate as that physical knowledge which is generally obtained in the nursery—a knowledge of its intellectual capabilities, which will direct to that position in life where they will be most fully developed and most usefully exercised; and a knowledge of its usual tendencies, which will direct to that position, from which the greatest amount of good, and consequently of happiness, will be the result.

S K E T C H

OF

THE LITERARY CAREER OF MRS. ELLIS.

FOR a writer of many books, Mrs. Ellis is singularly unknown to the public in her personal character ; so much so, that she might almost be said scarcely to have made the acquaintance of a single reviewer, nor ever to have done anything to conciliate the favour of one. How far this has been a disadvantage to her as an authoress, it might be difficult to decide ; but certainly, for one who values comfort more than distinction, and independence more than favour, a life of retirement and obscurity has much to recommend it in the way of enjoyment, and especially much to recommend it to a domestic woman.

The early life and habits of all writers have undoubtedly much to do with the general style of their works. That of Mrs. Ellis was spent entirely in the country, and in a peculiarly independent manner. Her affections through a motherless girlhood were drawn out by nature, rather than society. Her love of animals, and her power of winning them into companionship, was extraordinary. Her delight, too, in all that was lovely or sublime in scenery, led her often into habits of solitary musing, which her subsequent high sense of practical duty had much difficulty in correcting.

It is probably owing to causes of this nature, as well as a naturally imaginative temperament, that Mrs. Ellis has been able to blend, in no very ordinary manner, a certain amount of romance with her reality ; or, in other

words, an intense love of art and appreciation of beauty, with considerable practical usefulness.

In her native home, situated on the eastern coast of Yorkshire, Mrs. Ellis, then Miss Sarah Stickney, first formed the project of writing a series of simple stories for the purpose of illustrating certain moral truths, supposed by her to be of great importance to the well-being of society. These stories, under the general title of "*Pictures of Private Life*," appeared in three volumes, at intervals of about one year, and were published by Messrs. Smith and Elder, to whom the writer was introduced by her highly valued friend, Thomas Pringle, the noble and enterprising advocate of the rights of South Africa. At his hospitable house at Highgate, Miss Sarah Stickney first became acquainted with the literary circle of which he formed the most valued link. But losing him, she lost all desire to seek any other literary association; and, retiring to her home in the north, she there wrote, first the genuine work of her heart, "*The Poetry of Life*," a series of essays, in two volumes; and next after that, a story, in three volumes, entitled, "*Home; or, the Iron Rule*."

Mrs. Ellis's next work—and the first after her marriage with the Rev. William Ellis—was that by which she is best known as a writer, "*The Women of England*."

A fact, perhaps more curious than uncommon, is worthy of observation in connection with this volume. Mrs. Ellis has often been heard to say, that of all she ever wrote, this work had least to do with her own private feelings, cost her the least thought, and was committed to the printer's hands with the least care about its failure or success; while, on the other hand, those works upon which she bestowed the most feeling, thought, and consequent anxiety—those which she sent forth with something like the love of a mother for a favourite child—were the least esteemed by the public; or, at all events, were the most limited in their circulation. These were, "*The Poetry of Life*;" and, at a much later period, "*Prevention better than Cure*."

In all probability the publishers of "*The Women of England*" expected as little from the work as the author herself did. The copyright was sold for a comparatively trifling sum. The work had a rapid and extensive sale. Its title was a happy one; and, beyond this, it had the good fortune to embody in its pages what many people had been thinking, and were thinking at the time, without finding expression for. In considering the

wonderful success of this very simple work, Mrs. Ellis has often been heard to express the opinion, that any writer of common sense who is fortunate enough to discover and take up *the* subject about which many minds have felt perhaps, rather than thought, may easily write a book that will pass through eighteen or twenty editions, provided only they are lucky in the title, and, above all, are first in the field. To come afterwards into the same field, even with a tenfold amount of skill and talent, is a very different affair. Mrs. Ellis made the experiment with three other volumes on the Mothers, Wives, and Daughters of England; but these, though very superior in some respects and tolerably successful, never attained the popularity of the first.

Soon after the "Women of England" appeared, Mrs. Ellis commenced a series of stories under the title of "Family Secrets." These were published in monthly numbers, and found a very extensive sale. They were written with the view of introducing the subject of temperance, on which the author was much interested, to a class of readers which at that time the great question of total abstinence had scarcely reached; and for all the repugnance—and it was not a little—which attended both the writing and the first issue of these stories, the author was more than rewarded by the tokens of sympathy which attended their reception in various quarters, as well as by the incalculably large number of copies that were sold.

"The Sons of the Soil," a poem descriptive of rural life and scenery, appeared about the same time; and subsequently, while residing in the South of France, "Summer and Winter in the Pyrenees."

During this period Mrs. Ellis edited for many years "The Juvenile Scrap-Book;" and for some time "The Drawing-Room Scrap-Book." At a later period, she wrote two other stories in monthly numbers. The first of these was entitled "Social Distinctions;" the second, "Self-Deception."

Altogether, Mrs. Ellis has written more books than it would be easy for an ordinary memory to recollect. She has generally laboured with a sound moral aim; and that she has laboured earnestly too, her enemies, if she has any, would be candid enough to admit. At the same time, however, it must be allowed that so much writing, without any very extensive range of subjects, must almost necessarily lead to repeating truisms. This, however, is in some measure atoned for by untiring ingenuity of invention, and by considerable knowledge of human character, which enables her to impart an air of reality and truth to her descriptions.

The very nature of some of Mrs. Ellis's works, specifying as they do the most minute and practical of social and domestic duties, has also involved her in a somewhat dictatorial style of writing, which has sometimes given offence where she would have been much more happy to conciliate; drawing, very naturally, upon herself a spirit of retort, and inquiry as to how far, in her own habits, she acts out what she preaches to others. Inquiries of this nature Mrs. Ellis has been able to endure with considerable composure, her life being, as already stated, one of a peculiarly domestic nature; so much so, that to all who knew her best, and especially to herself, her books are but as an accident in her experience, having very little to do with the chief objects of her life.

One of these is worthy of mention here, as affording much practical data on which to found her opinions of the moral wants of human nature, and the necessary training of youth in a manner calculated to supply those wants. For many years past Mrs. Ellis, in connection with an intimate friend, has had the superintendence of a school for young ladies; and in the general plans and conduct of this school, many of her ideas of the qualifications necessary for an honourable, useful, and happy female character, are attempted to be carried out. How far this attempt has been productive of the results so much to be desired, the next generation of Englishwomen will be better able to say than those of the present.



THE MOTHER'S MISTAKE.

CHAPTER I.

**We are brave dreamers, and our fancy takes
Wild flights when out her spangled wings she
shakes;**

**We are brave schemers, and we build our schemes
Upon foundations often false as dreams.**

A joyful exclamation, almost simultaneously uttered, was the first sound which broke upon the silence of an elegant and newly-furnished drawing-room, where a recently married couple exulted in the happy feeling that they were now at their own home. The words in which they expressed their satisfaction were familiar and common-place enough; but, in the present instance, not without meaning, for an exploring tour had just been made around the house, garden, and premises,

and the truly happy couple had seated themselves in an apartment where nothing seemed left for the most fastidious taste to desire. It was not that the residence was particularly spacious or magnificent. If the truth must be told, it was only a suburban villa, very similar to hundreds of what are called genteel residences in the vicinity of London; but it was so perfect in its furniture and general equipments, all having been arranged in reference to harmony, rather than splendour—to comfort, rather than display,—that the young wife must have been deficient in feeling, as well as in taste, not to have viewed with grateful satisfaction the cheerful welcome afforded by such a home.

Those who imagine that a bride should only be accounted happy whose home is a baronial mansion, surrounded by parks and pleasure-grounds, will probably smile at the idea of our little villa being the scene of any kind of enjoyment worth writing about; and yet, even this snug residence had its fountain, terrace, and portico; its grassy lawn and winding walks; its bower, and its weeping willow; all as picturesque, in their way, as art could make them; but all on a scale so minute as to render the ingenuity of the design as wonderful as the taste with which it was carried out.

It was the general grouping, then, of this home scene—its completeness and harmony, which so forcibly arrested the attention of the beholder: not was the exulting husband afraid to put his few familiar words in the form of a question, as if, in fact, inquiring—"Is this not sufficient?" or, "have you any wish beyond this?" To which the wife replied with equal frankness, "You have indeed done all, and more than all, I could have imagined, to make me happy."

So far so good; we will not, under present circumstances, institute the ungracious inquiry, how many newly-married couples have sat down thus satisfied at first, yet found, in an incredibly short space of time, that a thousand things were needed which they felt no want of then, and that much of what looked so perfect on first inspection, required to be altered or removed.

The reader, however, has little of this kind of discontent to apprehend from our happy couple, whose tendency of mind was rather in an opposite direction; so that, upon the whole, they were disposed to be exceedingly well pleased with their outward circumstances, with each other, and with themselves. "Comfortable people," they might very properly be designated, and everything around and about them was in keeping with this epithet.

Mr. Clifton, for that was the gentleman's name, was a city merchant, the son of a city merchant, and highly respected amongst his fellow merchants as a shrewd, active, and promising young man. His ambition was reasonable, as the world goes; for he only wanted to be rich and comfortable, and these results he seemed as likely to secure as half the men, or gentlemen, with whom he was in the habit of transacting business.

Mrs. Clifton,—and with her we shall have more to do,—was in all respects a fitting match for such a husband. She had a comfortable amount of property of her own, and the same might be said of her beauty, her talents, and her virtues in general. In none of these could it be pronounced, that her qualifications either exceeded, or fell short of, the comfortable. Only one exception—one little exception, on the side of excess, must be

noticed; and we do so with delicacy, scarcely knowing whether this peculiarity ought to be classed as an excellence, or as a fault. Mrs. Clifton was eminently prospective. In all she did, in all she said, and in all she thought about, the future was especially considered. Pity it was, that while so many were wanting this essential requisite to common prudence, Mrs. Clifton should have a little—just a *little* too much of it. But so it was.

At first this characteristic looked amiable enough, for the kind lady cared for other people's future as well as for her own. At first this peculiarity looked prudent, and promising in the highest degree; for all changes and accidents in life seemed to be provided for by this far-sighted woman, who had a resource for every emergency, and a plan for everything likely or unlikely to take place.

"What a treasure of a wife Mr. Clifton has found!" was, consequently, the frequent exclamation of those who called on the newly-married pair; and, "If you were only like Mrs. Clifton," was the invidious remark of more than one discontented lord of creation, on finding his own domestic future not provided for according to his taste. And no doubt this characteristic *trait* was a great excellence in the young wife, as it would be in any wife either young or old, only it wanted one requisite for ensuring any amount of successful results—that the prospective vision should be *true*, as well as far-reaching; or the mistakes it is liable to make may be fatal in proportion to its extent.

The lady in question, however, did not think she could very easily make any mistakes, because she always looked at a subject in every point of view, turned it over and over, examined, reconsidered it, and then acted upon the probabilities of the case, as she believed them to be arrived at by this minute and careful examination.

With this prospective vision, Mrs. Clifton soon began to look upon her little villa, and, although as a whole it was perfect for the time being, there was an endless variety of circumstances to be considered, all bearing strict relation to the villa, and any one of which might require some material alteration in its present arrangements.

At first, as we have said, this provisional faculty in the young wife appeared exceedingly hopeful and satisfactory; and Mr. Clifton exulted in the certainty, that his future, and that of his whole household, would be taken care of. Besides which, sufficient time had not yet passed to bring to light any glaring instance of miscalculation; so that all went well, and even triumphantly, for twelve months, at least, with the exception of a little more bustle than the husband saw to be absolutely necessary—a little more of the machinery of his wife's contrivances kept visibly at work, than he regarded as consistent with that domestic repose which all men seek in their suburban homes, on escaping from the dust and turmoil of business in a crowded city.

With these slight exceptions, all went well, until the wife had a dream—a memorable and important dream it might have been; but, occurring to one who trusted implicitly to her waking senses, and who kept her senses rather more than usually awake, it only faded away, like all those other dreams whose very evanescence has made them a proverb from the creation of the world until the present time.

The dream we speak of took place on the eve of a great domestic event in the Clifton villa—an event which might reasonably justify any amount of female calculation being set to work upon it, or any amount of imagination, investing the future with an interest unsurpassed by any which this life affords.

Mrs. Clifton's future would have been comparatively blank and empty, and, consequently, much of her native talent would have been unemployed, had no addition to her family cares been anticipated. So large an amount of prospective genius, however, was not destined to be thrown away. Additional cares, and additional joys were expected; and oh! what a field now opened—what a day now dawned upon the far calculating wife! But in the mean time she had a dream—a very foolish dream she considered it, when wide awake; and although it recurred again and again, and often mixed itself up in her after calculations, it was only to be cast aside as utterly worthless—a vision of the night, and nothing more.

The dream was strangely imaginative

for so practical a thinker, for it presented itself in a somewhat supernatural form. The sleeper had closed her eyes with such feelings locked within her breast, as none but an anxious mother can understand. She had commended herself, her husband, her household, and all that should ever be hers, to the care of a kind and watchful Providence, and with that she had slept. Very naturally, she soon fancied herself watching over an infant in its sleep, and very beautiful it looked to her, for it was her own child—very beautiful, had it been any child, for what spectacle can be more so than a sleeping infant? Gazing on the child, it seemed to the dreamer that a group of angels stood near, looking with benign expression of countenance upon the slumbering babe. She wished to ask the leader of the shining band if he came with any message for her respecting the future training, or the future destiny of that child; but ever as she began to speak, he placed his finger on his lip, and then pointed to the couch where the infant lay, as if to indicate that the attention of the mother must be centred there, and confined alone to what she should behold.

To comply with this intimation, she needed no further hint, after perceiving that some mystery was about to be disclosed; for, as she watched with intense anxiety, there appeared to be a misty curtain moving slowly over the head of the little sleeper. Gradually this filmy veil was entirely removed, and beneath lay the living brain of the future being, all spread out like a map, so minute in its various and distinctive characteristics and capabilities, and yet so clearly marked, that the eye could, without difficulty, discover the smallest vein through which the blood of life was flowing.

Nor was this spectacle appalling to the beholder, but beautiful, most beautiful; for all the inner structure and the secret office of each portion of the brain was brought distinctly into view—the very working of energy and life in all displayed—the delicate and mysterious association, as it were, of soul and body—of nerve and muscle—of will and act: all these were made manifest, so that under the observant gaze might be seen to grow, as it appeared, out of nothingness, the future development of what each portion of the

brain was so constructed as to supply the means of carrying out into actual and material results.

Gazing still more and more intently upon this wonderful picture, she who dreamed she was the mother of the child, became aware that the finger of the attendant angel pointed to one particular portion of the brain; and, turning her eyes in that direction, she soon discovered that there especially were manifest those indications of life and action which she had previously noticed busily at work. At first, the office of this function was but dimly developed; but, on looking more narrowly, all doubt was dispelled, for a most elaborate and complicated architectural scene was made beautifully manifest, in which, while all was still so minute that the eye of spiritual inspection alone could trace the different lines and orders, yet all was clear, and each part perfect in itself, without the slightest intersection or confusion of any kind. And there, in that fairy region of vital action and exquisite beauty, arose the slender column of Corinthian grace, the classic portico, the majestic dome, the silent shadowy aisle spanned by the Gothic arch; nor these alone, but minarets, and towers, and castellated-halls, each adorned in every part, according to its separate order, with the richest embellishments appropriate to the times in which that order prevailed. Here, too, might be seen the Pyramids, the avenue of Sphinxes, and the giant statue, still majestic, though reduced to a mere speck—for what cannot dreamers effect?—the statue sitting in its ancient solitude, and slumbering on through all the revolutions of time.

But in all this wonderful panorama, nothing was quiescent, with the exception of these memorials of the past, and even these began to totter on their base; each structure seemed rather to be in the very act of growing, of rising into form and fitness, and placing itself in some position of utility; and that immediately out of the rough material of which it was composed. Here the graceful bridge was thrown across the river by an unseen hand—there the promontory was pierced by the rapid tunnel;—on one hand the side of the mountain was cleft, and a smooth passage carried over the scattered rocks—on the other the very sea itself was driven out,

and a proud breastwork of safety planted deep amongst its raging waves.

But what could all this mean? The wondering gazer turned to the angel again and again to ask the question—what could all this mean? And still the heavenly messenger kept silence, only pointing ever to the same object, as if that alone contained all the message which it was his mission to deliver.

With an increase of effort to obtain the knowledge so much desired, the dreamer awoke. It is difficult at first to shake off the effects of any impressive dream, and it is still more difficult to make that impression understood and felt by others. Had Mrs. Clifton been a more imaginative woman than she was, she might still have failed in attempting to convey any just idea of this strange vision to the mind of her husband. Even to her own it bore no further importance than as being distinct and curious in itself, not as having any kind of relation to the duties which were about to occupy her life. Indeed, she was almost vexed that the dream hung about her as it did, and endeavoured, as people often do, to get rid of the troublesome idea by communicating it to others. Thus a nurse was soon made her confidant; and with characteristic sagacity, that domestic oracle gave out her interpretation thereof. "The child," said the nurse, "is to build up the fortunes of his house and family, and great fortunes they will be. Riches," she said, "were in store for the son and heir of the Cliftons; there could be no doubt of that—most likely titles for his descendants; and all through his own energy and skill in putting things together with a profit in them."

Mrs. Clifton did not quite see the riches which the nurse talked about, manifested in her dream; but, like many others, she allowed the woman to go on talking, not altogether displeased with the nonsense which she uttered.

And so in due time this sagacious personage, the nurse, held upon her knee a real infant, and uttered all her oracles in the living voice, with infinite variety of tone and cadence, the demand for which, on the part of helpless infancy, would seem, according to popular usage, to be without choice, as it is without limit. And

so the nurse went on, building up the fortunes of the family to the appropriate tune of "Auld lang syne," or any other that might suggest itself, with the little heir of the Cliftons in her arms; for the child was a boy, and consequently there was reasonable ground for belief that her interpretation of the dream would be fulfilled.

The mother, however, lightly as she thought of the picture which had been presented to her sleeping senses, had her waking dreams, to which she attached infinite importance. Yes—practical woman as she was, she still employed herself in dreaming, and trusting to her dreams; for this trick of looking perpetually into the future can scarcely deserve a more substantial name than dreaming, unless the occupation is carried on with some regard to system and principle as the foundation of purpose. And while the nurse sung loud and long about the fortunes of the house, the mother lay quietly planning and scheming for her child, with as much decision of will and certainty of feeling about its future lot, as if no unexpected accident or change had ever happened either to mother or child in all this changing world. There was this difference betwixt the nurse and mother,—the nurse could sing of her prognostications to any tune, or to no tune whatever; the mother deeply pondered in her heart all that she imagined or pictured out for the future fortune of her child; and to no one, not even to her husband, did she ever disclose one hundredth part of those images which formed the grouping of her picture.

The things that are dearest to us, we cannot always speak of the most freely; and very dear to the brooding heart of the mother were the schemes she was forming for her first-born child. She could not well have borne to have them dragged to light, and openly discussed. There was something too sacred in the fabric she was weaving for the future—weaving, as it were, in the very depths of her soul—but which was to clothe her child in dignity and beauty before the world.

It is more than probable, that even had Mrs. Clifton communicated to her husband one half of that which she saw so clearly in her waking dreams, that the result

would have been far from satisfactory; for the busy merchant was now beginning to have less and less time to attend to his domestic affairs. We have said that even in early youth, Mr. Clifton gave promise of being an active, industrious, and successful man. He was one of a large family of brothers and sisters, and consequently did not embark in life with any superabundance of capital. Besides which, his habits were unostentatious; his mode of living respectable, rather than showy. He boasted sometimes that his wants were few; and so they certainly were in the way of personal indulgences. But, as often happens to men of his temperament, no sooner did he begin to realize the cares of a family, the increased requirements of even one addition to his household, than he took up the notion that he must set about more earnestly than he had ever done before, to make money; and thus it was, that while not wanting in kindness, either as a husband or a father, he became daily more and more at a loss for time to discharge the duties attaching to both. He believed, in short, that it was his business which required his supreme attention, and his utmost stretch of time. He believed that his grand duty was to provide the pecuniary resources for a rising family, and like thousands of fathers and husbands similarly circumstanced, he was in imminent danger of growing to believe that he had no other duty to discharge.

Mr. Clifton rejoiced with genuine gladness that his wife was safe and well; he was not a little pleased, too, that the child was of the nobler sex; but what availed to him all the blandishments of the nursery, all the wiping of a little mouth to make it fit to be kissed, all the fitting of a new hat much to the discontent of the little wearer, all the talk about coming teeth, and utterances of actual words, which singularly enough connect themselves with the very earliest stages of infancy, where a first child is concerned—what availed all these to the man of business, when the omnibus which conveyed him every morning to the city was actually at his door?

Thus circumstanced, and believing implicitly in the popular creed of the genuine man of business, Mr. Clifton

rejoiced exceedingly in the wise selection he had made of a wife who was fully competent to take upon herself the personal management of his entire family. It was an excellent thing for him, he said to himself again and again, that he had so clever and managing a helpmate, one who was eminently qualified for looking far into the future, and taking into account all those little circumstances which he had no time for. Indeed his sphere of thought and action lay, as he believed, in a widely different and far more important line. The bringing up children, with such little matters, was for the woman—the weaker vessel; for him!—why there were those taxes on colonial produce, and the effects they would be sure to bring upon the prices of sugars and molasses. If ministers really meant to carry out that scheme, they must look to their places,—that was all he had to say.

So Mr. Clifton darted every morning into the crowded omnibus, exchanged a few passing observations with his accustomed fellow-travellers, took out his pocket-book, made a few calculations, and was then duly set down at the corner of a murky dismal street leading to his own office.

Thus the mother and the nurse remained sole and undisputed disposers of the affairs of the nursery, nor did they murmur at their responsibility. Mrs. Clifton, indeed, for a young mother, felt herself unusually competent to bear all in her own person; so much so, that it is quite possible she might not have yielded any considerable portion of it with a good grace to another. The plan of life laid out by her for her child was neither unreasonable in itself, nor unlikely to be realised. The framework of the plan was this; but it had infinite variety of details, not necessary to be specified at this stage of our story. Robert, the eldest son, now slumbering in lace cap and pinafore, was to be brought up to his father's business—there could be no demur about that. He would have a liberal education bestowed upon him, and would then be placed, as early as possible, in his father's office. Here he would distinguish himself, not only by general application to business, but by superior skill and acuteness as an accountant. This would please the father, and

give him confidence in his son, so that he would rise rapidly from one position of trust to another; his father's commercial transactions prospering and rising in the same proportion all the while. Then there were pictures of civic honours interwoven with these pleasant waking dreams—aldermanic dignities, and gorgeous city feasts; farther, honours received at the hands of royalty—knighthood, conferred in acknowledgment of signal services—all agreeing well with that interpretation of the mother's dream, as delivered by the nursery oracle, that the child was destined to become the builder-up of the fortunes of his family.

Not that Mr. Clifton needed particularly just now, or appeared likely to need, much building up in that way. He was justly considered to be a prosperous man; but he owed much of his prosperity to his own prudence. In all his transactions, as already stated, and especially in all his personal indulgences, he evinced a degree of self-denial not often exemplified by the younger branches of what is called a prosperous house. Mr. Clifton, however, knew his own circumstances best. With honest manliness he had looked them fairly in the face before placing himself at the head of a household; and, while perfectly aware that he might as reasonably keep his horse and groom as half the young men who dashed past him on their way to the city, he still rode complacently in a vulgar omnibus, not unfrequently congratulating himself by the way upon the escape from trouble, expense, and vexation which this humble conveyance enabled him to enjoy.

Perhaps this constitutional desire to escape from trouble and responsibility stood out rather prominently sometimes amongst Mr. Clifton's other characteristics. In business, nothing could exceed his alacrity and attention. But then he liked business, it was his *forte*. His senses, his very soul, delighted in business. All those extra responsibilities, those little tiresome home matters, in which the women-folk are so conversant,—it was these which he did not, and would not trouble his head about; nor could he be brought to consider them in any way worthy the attention of a man of business. Yielding, then, as he did, to a sort of constitutional shrinking from these duties, it may easily

be supposed how the increasing cares of his family added day by day new weight to Mr. Clifton's estimate of the provisional propensities of his wife. If, for instance, Mrs. Clifton wished to consult her husband respecting any family matters, and so addressed herself to him on his return home from the city, his answer usually was, "Do just as you think best, my love. I am quite knocked up to-night. It is impossible for me to be troubled about such things after all I have to do and think about during the day." If Mrs. Clifton made a second attempt in the morning, the case was still more hopeless, for then the hasty breakfast had to be swallowed, the omnibus was rattling along the road, and attention was manifestly impossible.

On Sunday, too, there was quite as little chance of success on the part of the wife. Mr. Clifton was as bustling and punctilious in his religion as in his business; and what with sleeping two good hours longer on that morning than on any other; and what with getting all his family off to church, and ascertaining the time of the servants' return, and whether they had really been to church or not; what with an excellent practice of his, that of inviting a clerk or two, who had no relatives in town, to eat their Sunday dinner at the villa; somehow or other, the day always slipped over without any opportunity for engaging the ear of the husband and father on subjects which he did not consider as within the sphere of his personal duties.

In connection with this constitutional tendency of Mr. Clifton, it must, in justice to him, be stated that he did not, like some husbands, refuse to attend when consulted, yet reserve for himself a large amount of privilege in the way of finding fault when the thing was done. No. He was so fully satisfied with the superior capabilities of his wife, that he rather slid off from his own shoulders upon hers all the moral responsibilities of their entire domestic world, with the sole exception of getting his servants off to church on Sundays, and having them in for early prayers on the evening of that day; but these items of responsibility he regarded as religious, not moral — with the latter he had nothing to do.

So Mrs. Clifton went on scheming and planning for her family, with the greatest satisfaction to herself, and not the less so, that she met with no interruption, nor was thwarted by any interference from others. It would have been strange had her schemes been limited to the position, character, and destiny of one child alone. In her prospective vision, there were more places than one to be filled, and the second was, if possible, more important than the first.

Mrs. Clifton had pride in her family. There was an uncle who had obtained the rank of admiral on her side of the house; and this fact, seldom forgotten or left out of calculation, afforded no unreasonable ground of hope, with regard to patronage and promotion, could one of her sons be fairly placed in that particular line of distinction. This was a more secret—a deeper, and, perhaps, a dearer thought on the mother's part, than any which found utterance respecting her first-born, but it was not the less fixed in form, or determined in purpose, for being seldom expressed.

It was a curious circumstance in the history of this family, that, previous to the birth of each child, the dream was repeated, in which the angels again appeared to the mother, again disclosed, as it were, the inner-working of the infant's brain, again pointed to some particular development, and again refused to explain by words what their message was intended to convey. Mrs. Clifton believed that each repetition of the dream was nothing more than a recurrence of her own mind to the impression made on a previous occasion. To be sure the scene was distinctly different in each, and in each the heavenly messenger pointed to a different exemplification of the meaning indicated. But it was "all nonsense" Mrs. Clifton said on awaking; and so slight was the attention which she gave to the fact, that even the dreams themselves grew fainter each time they were repeated, and their meaning consequently less distinct and intelligible. Only in the second instance will we attempt to describe the scene which was even then but dimly and partially disclosed.

The second little Clifton, if a boy, was to be — Admiral Clifton; the mother thought this a fine-sounding title, and

the child was to be placed under the especial patronage of her uncle, a peculiar old gentleman, who did not appear to have a superabundance of the milk of human kindness to bestow upon any child. The dream which preceded the birth of this child was of difficult interpretation even to the nurse; who, on hearing it described, looked wise as ever, and shook her head in a more than usually knowing manner, but kept her wisdom to herself,—thus showing more clearly than by words, that she had some pretension to the possession of that gift.

The dream, so far as language might render it intelligible, was after this fashion. A peculiar solemnity seemed to envelope the scene, when the filmy curtain was about to be removed. Indeed, a peculiar and strange beauty hung about this child,—something which the mother said on awaking made her weep,—she knew not why; so that she would almost have drawn back the veil, from an impulse of tenderness towards the unconscious sleeper. Seldom, indeed, did the mother afterwards speak of this dream. It pained her, she said, to recall it; and yet it hung about her even more than the former dream had done. It seemed to her, she said, when at first she did speak of it, that a clear soft music played about the child as it slept,—sometimes low and deep, and then so shrill and plaintive, as if the voice of prayer were mingled with the cry of penitence; or that the great agony of primeval sin was the burden of the sound,—far more than any merely earthly feelings or passions? And then the scene which the living brain presented was so strange!—it was half shadow, and half light; something, on the one hand, like the deepest midnight, or the most awful sepulchral gloom,—on the other, the clear shining of early sunlight upon mountain tops. Then there was the wreathing smoke of incense burning on an altar, and then the far-off chanting of an unseen multitude, and harps were struck of sweetest melody, and angel-voices answered to each other, but all cried “welcome!” in different tones, and various speech. And then a tempest came, with wind and hail, and the deep booming of wild cold waves, and on the deck of a lone vessel lay a slender crouching form, with countenance of

agony, and cry so piercing that the mother woke,—woke weeping, and terrified, and only to be comforted by the conviction that it *was* a dream,—a foolish dream, and nothing more.

What could be the matter with her? Mrs. Clifton asked the nurse, that she must always be tormented with these stupid dreams. The nurse prescribed a sleeping cordial, and little more was said about the matter, until the birth of the little admiral that was to be—a puny, slender, blue-eyed babe, as unlikely as anything in human form could be, to climb the tall mast of the gallant vessel, or to breast the billows of a wild and stormy sea.

Some mothers would have suspected there was really a design, or at least a meaning, in these dreams, repeated as they were. But Mrs. Clifton suspected no such thing; and not even when the boys exhibited, as they often did in their childish sports, some striking characteristics, did the mother yield to any suggestions that she might have been wrong in the destination which she had assigned to each.

Some mothers would have read in their infant traits of character instructive lessons as to the training and the choice of circumstances, so far as they can be chosen, of their children. Some mothers would have thought it not only wiser, but more kind, to consult the leading tendency of character in choosing their children's position, and future mode of life, than to consider only what in a worldly point of view appeared most advantageous; but Mrs. Clifton knew as much about the philosophy of human nature, as she did about that of the moon and stars; nor did the former enter much more into her domestic calculations than those bright luminaries themselves.

For this reason it is that we shall pursue the history of this family, not to exhibit any want of kindly feeling on the mother's part, nor even of the most earnest solicitude for the good of her children; but to show how inattention to those principles which lie at the foundation of character and conduct in general, may frustrate the best intentions, and turn the chief purpose of a busy and well-meaning life into a mistake.



CHAPTER II.

Ever in childhood's sports and plays
The opening mind its bent displays,
And so the child shapes out the plan
That best may suit the future man.

HAVING so far delineated the leading characteristics of the heads of the Clifton family, we turn not unwillingly to the younger branches of the house, and to those who are more especially to live and act in the further development of our story. It is, consequently, necessary at this stage of its progress to overstep a few of the less eventful years of their history, at all events so many as will bring us again into acquaintance with the villa, after other portions of the establishment besides its nursery, have become enlivened by the stirring feet, the merry laughter, and the busy hands of a happy and hopeful little family.

Mrs. Clifton at this stage of her life was a woman of many cares, but also of many enjoyments. She was naturally

fond of children, as well as fond of managing and scheming for those whom it was her business or her pleasure to manage; for it was said of her, that she extended the sphere of her operations a little beyond what was positively demanded of her by any direct business of hers. Five healthy and promising children of her own, however, afforded at the present time abundant scope for the exercise of all her provisional, as well as matronly propensities. Five olive-branches now graced the paternal board.

The boys, especially, had begun to evince those characteristics which had been clearly indicated by the dream which preceded the birth of each, but to which the mother paid so little respect in her prospective arrangements. For instance, it was no uncommon thing to find the three brothers grouped together in the garden, the oldest ever at work constructing houses, or bridges, or boats, out of such materials as fell in his way; the second gazing thoughtfully upon his bro-

ther's work, but taking no active part in it; and the third, even while a mere infant, wielding some weapon of warfare, with which he was apt to strike down whatever edifice his strength was able to destroy.

Without recording the nature of any of the mother's after dreams,—for though regularly repeated they became, as already stated, less distinct, as well as less regarded,—it is important only to state, that the little Cliftons arose and walked much according to their parents' wishes, in the following order:—Robert, the oldest, destined to carry on his father's business,—Seymour, destined to be an Admiral,—Philip, destined for the Church,—Helen, destined to be a beauty, and to make a great connection in marriage,—Catharine, destined to be learned and clever, because she did not appear very likely to be beautiful. It must be confessed that this last item in the family catalogue had a very different destination allotted to her in the mother's calculations previous to her birth, because she was not expected to be a girl. There had, in fact, been a whole life laid out for her, or rather for *him*, with perhaps more certainty than for any of the others. Of this we say nothing further, feeling a little delicacy for maternal feelings under so signal a mistake. It would have been well for Mrs. Clifton's family had she made no more practical mistakes than this.

The youngest child, too, besides being a girl, evinced certain other characteristics which threatened seriously to endanger any ambitious structure which might be built upon the foundation of her feminine graces. As an infant she was singularly plain-looking, and hence the popular destination for those who are so was adopted; and as a matter of necessity not at all in conformity with the vision which, in this instance, at least, might have been understood, this child was to be clever,—talented,—distinguished perhaps as an authoress, or as the leader of a literary circle; which the mother thought, with reason on her side, would be really being more distinguished, than if she wrote books herself, seeing writers were so common.

All these destinations being clearly planned out, all these matters being finally settled, and no other little life

appearing likely to be committed to her care for plans and settlement, Mrs. Clifton had nothing left to do but to get her children trained and educated. It would have seemed likely enough, according to her theory of the future, that their education should have had especial reference to what the children were expected to do, and to be, in after life. But no such idea of adaptation ever seemed to dawn upon the parental mind. School was school to Mr. and Mrs. Clifton, and so long as the accustomed items of what is called a first-rate education were duly filled up in the catalogue, and duly paid for, neither the father nor the mother thought it necessary to trouble themselves about the result. Both, indeed, seemed to have imbibed, and so rested satisfied in, the somewhat vulgar notion, that if they paid well they should be well served. So they made up their minds to stint for nothing in the way of masters, &c., and only inquired in the different families with whom they visited as to which schools they could most cordially recommend. Of course the recommendations thus elicited were so many and so various, that the question increased in difficulty, instead of being cleared up by this mode of procedure; so that the common consequences ensued—the children were sent to many schools, and by making trial of numbers, it was hoped they would select and profit by what was good in each.

To Robert, the oldest son, this constant liability to change failed to afford the pleasure which most children experience in the prospect of escaping from one school to another, under the hope of leaving all that is disagreeable behind. He was rather remarkable for being a boy of one fixed idea, or rather one decided tendency of mind; and he cared less than many where he was, if only this constitutional tendency was allowed indulgence and exercise. At last he prevailed upon his parents to allow him to remain longer than they had intended,—indeed to finish his education, at one particular seminary, where he had attached himself in an especial manner to a master whose business it was to superintend the drawing department. Not that Robert was what is called a "genius" in this or

any other branch of art. The last thing he would have dreamed of being was an artist, as that word is generally understood. Little, indeed, of the ideal of general beauty had begun as yet to fill his heart, or fire his brain. He only loved,—and this he did love supremely,—to make all sorts of architectural drawings; not so much for their beauty, however, as for their character of utility. Thus strength, duration, capability of sustaining weight, and resisting force, were the qualities to which he most frequently endeavoured to give form. In short, all which belongs to the department of engineering, seemed to be implanted in his young mind with a depth which no other power, and no other attraction, could reach; and only just as far as was necessary for such purposes would he give his attention to those mathematical exercises which he was sometimes told by his father would prove the groundwork and foundation of his success in life.

Robert could not see very well how the higher branches of study, not even the study of mathematics, should assist him as a merchant. For himself, if he thought at all about the future, it was only to plan that, as a merchant, he should become rich; and so, by escaping very early from business, should be able to indulge his natural tastes by projecting railways, inventing bridges, or planning improvements in any other way. He thought he should buy an estate in some badly cultivated district; and, after bringing it into the highest state of cultivation, should then institute a sort of model school for engineers, where all sorts of practical experiments could be tested; a school to which men of science would resort, and which would in time become the centre of attraction to surrounding nations. Thus it will be observed Robert, also, was a dreamer, like his mother; but there was method and consistency in his dreams—there was also that which, had it been attended to in early youth, and cultivated with a view to his happiness and welfare, might have made him a benefactor to his country, and a blessing to the times in which he lived. But he is at school yet, and we must not anticipate.

Robert Clifton shared the fate of many other boys who are distinguished by one

particular gift or talent. He was allowed to cultivate that for the sake of display, and thus in a proportionate degree to neglect those other talents from which he was still expected to draw all his resources in after life. It pleased the honest pride of the master to whom Robert had attached himself to exhibit those perfect, and even wonderful drawings which his pupil liked so much to execute. It pleased him to know that Robert would infallibly carry away the first prize in this department; and it pleased the whole school that there was one boy belonging to it so eminently gifted. Thus many circumstances combined to render the indulgence of his native talent both a temptation and a delight to the boy. Even at home, such was the satisfaction with which these drawings were exhibited, that Robert would have been dull indeed to outward impressions had he not gathered from circumstances, though not from direct words, that to exercise with diligence and skill this natural gift of his was really the best and the wisest thing he could do. Such often—*how* often who shall say!—is the real and practical education which a child is receiving from circumstances, when the language, the advice, nay, even the prayers of a parent are vainly expended in attempting to turn the tastes and employments of the child into a widely different sphere of thought and action. When shall we understand these things better?

So Robert Clifton grew to be what is called a splendid draftsman, and gloried and delighted in the art. Robert was not proud of himself, still less was he a vain boaster; but he was proud of the gift which God had given him, and he did sometimes boast of what that gift might enable any man who possessed it to do. Even at school, there was scarcely any kind of accident or difficulty occurring in the practical occupations of the boys which Robert's constructive talent did not enable him to remedy or surmount; so that on all occasions when a clear head and a ready and methodical hand were wanted, young Clifton was called in; and if he could not set matters right, the whole school was convinced that no living person could. Had the boy really been a little vain and self-conceited no one could

have wondered, for there was a direct practical bearing in all that he did with this talent of his, which told mightily to his honour in a large community of boys.

But the time came, and to him it came too soon, for Robert to exchange this life for one confined to the dark dull precincts of his father's office. He knew his fate; he had known it from his childhood; and through all his boyish years he no more thought of resisting it than we think of ceasing to breathe, or to fulfil any other of those functions which we look upon as necessities of our existence. It is wonderful how persons, even high-spirited and independent in other respects, can become woven about by chains which bind them as if made of iron, when in reality they are the kind soft links of parental love. It is the early application, the long growth, and the constant unremitting tension of these chains, which make them grow into the very being, so that no power can tear them away. But beyond this—oh! far beyond—is the tenderness, the affection, the evident solicitude for the good of the being thus guarded and bound down, which interweaves the chain so closely with the very elements of being, that even death itself would sometimes be preferable to the rending of the chain away.

Beyond all this, Robert Clifton was a creature of habit, and he had looked so long at the favourite project of his parents, for his future good, that he himself would scarcely have turned his energies into any other channel as a means of living, even had the change been practicable. He had not tried it yet, however. He had only looked upon it as his father's favourite occupation; and there must, he doubted not, be something very pleasant in it, or why should so kind a father wish his son to follow in his steps. The truth was, Robert had no turn for accounts, simply as such,—for the mere dealing with dry figures, unless they had reference to proportion, or some other quality, which gave interest to the use of such figures in calculation. His father thought the two ideas of profit and loss gave them interest enough, but Robert had not felt the power of this interest yet.

While the oldest of the Cliftons thus pursued his toilsome way,—for toilsome it

was to him,—the other brothers grew up to take their separate places according to their destinations,—each, for the present, as uncomplainingly as their brother.

As the dream which preceded the birth of the second child had been more impressive to the feelings of the mother, though less distinct in its meaning than the first, so Seymour, the second boy, evinced a tendency of mind and character which threatened to baffle her most skillful designs in bringing about the end so much desired. Indeed, it must be confessed, that sometimes, under a sudden thrill of disappointment, her eye did turn doubtfully upon his younger brother Philip, whose sturdy limbs, and fearless temper, with something of the bold animal, or call it the lion heart about him, made him look far more like the future admiral than the gentle Seymour. But, no! this boy was destined for the Church—Seymour for the Navy; and they must be trained to fill their respective places,—that was all. It is quite probable that no particular qualities of mind or disposition, however adverse to the purpose in view, unless they included positive imbecility, would ever have cost the mother a single doubt; because she held firmly by the belief that training might do all which Nature had failed to do; but there was a delicacy of constitution apparent in the second son, which sometimes made the mother tremble for the consequences. The sea, however, she thought, was bracing. Once get him out, and he would be strong and vigorous like the rest of her children.

"But Seymour is a coward," suggested Philip; "he is frightened at a duck-pond. Let me go to sea,—I won't preach!" And he shouted this indignant protestation with the voice of an infant Hercules, much to the horror of his mother, who considered the expression of such sentiments as exceedingly irreverent, and as calling imperatively for immediate reproof, if not actual punishment.

All would not do, however, not even the more serious remonstrances of Robert, who had begun to think with Philip, that it would be well if the destination of the two brothers could be exchanged. Robert, however, like most people addicted to one ruling idea, willingly passed over much in which he might have taken a prominent

and useful part; although, whenever he did realize a fact, or make it his business to investigate any doubtful subject, his judgment was as correct as his heart was upright and kind.

That Seymy was a coward, was a very natural conclusion to be arrived at by such a boy as Philip, who loved any kind of boisterous battling in which his lusty limbs could be fully exercised, and who seemed to run into danger from the sheer pleasure it afforded him. Such natures can with difficulty understand how there may be a deep stratum of moral courage, sometimes underlying the weak surface of a delicate and ailing constitution of body. Seymy, doubtless was a coward, when Philip rocked violently the little boat in which they paddled to and fro in a pond at the farm, where they had been sent for the benefit of Seymour's health,—he was a coward when Philip played tricks with the tail of the pony, on which they performed their first equestrian exploits,—he was a coward when Philip provoked the great mastiff at the door, until the furious animal would have devoured them both, could he have snapped the slender chain by which he was restrained; but there were cases for which the delicate boy was provided with as much courage as his boisterous brother, and perhaps a little more.

One of these occurred soon after Seymour went to a public school,—where it may well be supposed his sufferings were not of the most trifling description, especially as he had no older brother to defend him; Mr. and Mrs. Clifton having adhered faithfully to the principle they had taken up, that their children should be educated at as many different schools as possible, in order that they might extract the cream of all. So poor Seymour had no strong arm to defend him, no kind just heart to take his part. Thus he became at once the butt of half a school of "terrible fellows," as Seymour thought them, whose very looks and language struck horror into his soul. He had, in fact, neither thoughts nor words in common with theirs; and when they wanted to fight him, he first hid himself, then cried bitterly, and then ran for protection to one of the masters.

So poor Seymy was stigmatised as a

coward, and worse than a coward—a tell-tale! And yet he would almost have suffered martyrdom to save any one of those boys from half the agony they were inflicting upon him. And why should he fight them? He wanted to be friends with all—to do everyone good, if it were possible. He could see no reason in the world why he should fight those who were perfect strangers to him, and against whom he had no animosity. Besides which, he knew he was weak, that he should be soon overcome—utterly beaten—perhaps killed; and his parents would never know how, or why. All these were thoughts which came afterwards, and in justification of what he had done to obtain so odious and disgraceful a character; for, to confess the truth, poor Seymour felt nothing at the time but terror—terror, and wretchedness not to be described; but arising far less out of the sense of personal danger than the conviction that he stood alone amongst numbers, and was hated—terrible doom to one so loving and so gentle! nor was his sentence much more easy to endure, now that he knew himself to be odious and despicable in the sight of his companions.

But, as already stated, Seymour could be roused, he could be so situated that his constitutional sense of danger vanished into nothing before his still stronger sense of injustice, oppression, or cruelty. It happened, in the school, in which he had been placed, that there was another feeble boy like himself, but weak in mind as well as body; and, what made some little difference, a boy who was looked upon as of lower grade than the others. This poor neglected fellow had learned to live a good deal alone, and to amuse himself without mixing much in the sports of the other boys. He was fond of animals, and particularly fond of a small patch of earth which he called his garden, and which he had surrounded by way of defence with a slender paling of broken sticks. These were continually knocked down by the other boys, who found endless amusement in committing depredations upon "Sloper's pleasure-grounds," as they called the garden. In the fondness of this boy for animals, he had at different times added something of a menagerie to his property, and on the arrival of Seymour

Clifton in the school, a hedgehog was his reigning favourite. This animal he had succeeded in taming, so that it would come out at his call; though, by a kind of instinctive terror, it rolled itself up and presented only a prickly ball to any other boy. Why the harmless hedgehog should be the victim of more boyish cruelty than almost any other animal is a question that might well puzzle the ablest naturalist, did not these men of science almost universally overlook the moral in their investigation of the physical. But so it is, and "Sloper's hedgehog" was no exception to the general rule.

On one occasion it happened that the little prickly ball had been kicked from one boy to another, for an unusual length of time; the frightened and agonised owner of this, to him precious property, standing in hopeless inaction, and watching the operations with tears in his eyes. There was one, however, who watched these operations besides himself, but not with tears. Had any one observed Seymour Clifton at that moment, they would scarcely have doubted his fitness for the command of an armada; for there he stood with flashing eye and burning cheek, the very personification of desperate and tremendous daring. At last a big burly fellow snatched the hedgehog from the others; and soon a strange weak cry arose, resembling that of an infant in pain. It is a fact, kind reader, that boys will take out a comb and saw it across the leg of the hedgehog, almost cutting it in two, for the purpose of making it utter this strange cry. These are poor ignorant boys, however, who do not happen to have been taught better. In the present instance, it is possible the cry was elicited by a less vulgar mode of proceeding. But whatever it might be, the pain was caused, and the cry was excited, to the disgust of some of the boys, but to the amusement of others.

The cry had scarcely been repeated a second time, when the boy who perpetrated the cruelty received such a blow on the side of his head as sent him staggering some yards over the grass, and finally brought him prostrate on the ground. As suddenly the hedgehog was snatched from his hands, and borne back to its rightful owner.

The boys looked amazed, as well they

might,—for it was no other than Seymour Clifton who had done this valiant act. Nor did any fear of consequences overtake him when the act was done. No; he returned like a man, confronted the boys, and told them they were a pack of mean cowardly despicable wretches to inflict that abominable cruelty upon a poor helpless creature wholly incapable of defending itself.

Taken in this manner so entirely by surprise, and convinced more by the truth than the eloquence of what Seymour said, the boys scarcely attempted to defend themselves; some looked angry, some pouted and shrugged their shoulders, but all, in the most unaccountable manner, dropped off, and went their way about other matters,—their fallen comrade being the first to discover that he had heard the bell ring for dinner five minutes before.

Nothing could exceed the gratitude of the poor boy whose humble favourite had thus been restored to him; and from that time, though Seymour Clifton might be more disliked by some of the boys, he was certainly more respected by all. He was, however, soon removed from this school to another, in which he pursued his studies with more comfort, in consequence of his having learned better how to conduct himself amongst other boys by the painful experience of his first outset in scholastic life. From this time forth Seymour betook himself to diligent and serious study. Relieved from the agony of mind which the treatment of the first school inflicted upon him, he seemed to give up his whole soul to the most laborious and sometimes difficult mental occupations, scarcely allowing himself time for necessary exercise. Indeed he seldom played like other boys, but kept aloof, and walked alone, whenever he could. Not that he was morose, selfish, or sullen. All who were in suffering or distress found him far otherwise, and he had ever a kind look or kind word for all; but their ways were not his ways, nor their thoughts his thoughts. Though habitually startled out of his self-possession at the first approach of personal danger, the delicate boy was often wishing himself dead. And then he used to think of the wild cold sea, and the great booming waves; and, perhaps, even more

than all, and with a greater horror still, of the coarse, rude sailors, and of the part that he should have to act amongst those who would rank with himself in order to maintain any tolerable degree of credit.

It would seem strange that of the two oldest Cliftons, Seymour was the only one who rebelled against his fate; but with all his delicacy and constitutional gentleness, the virtue of passive submission was not naturally his. Indeed duty seemed very hard to Seymour, much more so than to his brother Robert, who went his straightforward course in so direct and prompt a manner that few people would have been aware how much the faithful discharge of his did sometimes cost him. Seymour felt a thousand difficulties, however, where Robert felt perhaps but one; and mastered that with manly determination. But his brother's were never wholly mastered. They seemed ever to rise again in some new form; so that people always said of Seymour, "How is that boy ever to get through the world?"

Seymour wondered perhaps as much as any one, for to him the world looked very much at times like a great howling wilderness, only that he loved its myriad beauties; its wealth of woods; its garniture of flowers; and all the changing aspects of the clouds and sky; sunset and moonlight, morn, and evening. Oh, how he loved all these!—only there was the sea—the great cold sea! and he was destined to be tossed for ever on its restless bosom. The garden bower; the college nook; the household hearth; the classic luxuries of library and cabinet, were not for him; nor the sweet voice of home; but roar, and shout, and tumult, and strange men of other language than his own.

"Oh, Robert!" Seymour sometimes said, appealing to his brother, "do save me from this horrid sea?"

But Robert grew in time to think, with many others, that the sea would do his brother good; that the rough discipline of the life to which he was destined was the very thing to make a man of him. So he tried to laugh away this pitiful appeal, sometimes telling his brother that he did but share the common lot, that all had something to put up with not quite agreeable to their tastes, but that duty

must be done, however difficult. To all which reasoning Seymour listened, as may easily be supposed, without being comforted. "They none of them understand me," was the constant expression of his wounded spirit,—and perhaps he was not far wrong.

It was a custom with the heads of the Clifton family to send their children, during the Midsummer holidays, to some quiet rural place, generally a farm-house, where they were expected to drink new milk, and gain health every day. None of the family exulted in this change more than Philip, though all enjoyed it as children will, even where the means of enjoyment look rather poor and scanty to their older companions. All the Cliftons, however, enjoyed this change, according to their different tastes. Robert repaired to the shed of the village carpenter; or, if it must be exposed, sometimes to the village smithy. By degrees he collected together a very respectable set of tools, and then began to work his own lathe, and to carry on many other delightful operations in an old barn on the farm premises, which at that time of the year remained unoccupied. Philip was by turns the haymaker, the cattle-driver, the fetcher-up of stray ponies, or the active agent in any wild work that had to be done,—performing, for his own private amusement, about ninety-nine strokes of mischief for one of work. The sisters (for we must now introduce them into the scene) were not behind their brothers in any kind of play which did not involve them in the dangers to which Philip was so much addicted. The work, however, they absolutely declined, and so spent their time in romping until they were tired, and then reposing in a sort of listless indolence, neither reading nor doing anything else to which a name could be assigned. The nearest escape from this state is to what is called fancy-work, and of course the Cliftons had their share of that. But at present their characters are too little developed to admit of much being said about them; only that Helen, the older, was beginning to display, in her almost perfect form and face, those indications of womanly attraction upon which her mother had so confidently calculated; while little Kitty, still a mere child, ran

about hither and thither, the most careless, and perhaps the most unlovely, creature that ever escaped the charge of sheer ugliness. How Kitty did escape no one ever knew, nor why, while associated with her beautiful sister, she so often managed to become the favourite,—but so it was; and even now, young as she was, there was an almost universal cry for little Kitty, whenever anything pleasant was about to be done, or anything funny about to be enjoyed. It was Kitty in the boat, Kitty on the pony, Kitty everywhere, or the happiness of the other children seemed not to be complete. Perhaps it was her youth, her childishness, the fact of her being the child amongst older children, who naturally like to have something like infancy committed to their keeping. We can only repeat that so it was, leaving her future history to explain the cause.

Especially to Seymour Clifton did the presence of his little sister Kitty appear to impart a never-failing joy, while the merry child on her part seemed to find equal pleasure in clinging to the soft white hand of the delicate and gentle boy. And yet these two walked very silently together, comported with the style in which the others comported themselves; and it was curious to see how Kitty, whose laugh was the most infectious and unrestrained amongst her stronger brothers, would hush her wild giggling, and subdue her voice when she approached her brother Seymour, as if something like an instinctive awe came over her; and sometimes when she looked up steadily into his clear blue eyes, there came quick gushing tears into her own, and such a solemn thoughtful expression spread itself all over her little ordinary face, that Seymour himself would laugh, and ask her why she looked in that way, though he loved the little earnest countenance the better for its strange old look.

Girls begin early to evince their womanly propensities, and that of attaching themselves to objects requiring peculiar attention and care is one of their first indications of this kind. It is said of them—or perhaps we ought to say of women, not of girls,—that they love the strong, the powerful, those from whom they themselves expect assistance or protection. But this is a low view to take of woman's ten-

dencies. Rather let us believe that they yearn to be the care-takers themselves, as Nature has fitted them to be—that they esteem it more blessed to give than to receive; and so with instinctive tenderness espouse the cause of the delicate, the suffering, or the oppressed. Certain it is, that our little Kitty, from some cause or other, attached herself in an especial manner to her brother Seymour; and when she saw him borne down, or rallied beyond his powers of patient endurance by either of his brothers, her cheek flushed, and her eyes flashed fire, as if she felt herself the honoured champion who was to fight his battles, and to give him all the glory.

In this manner the child grew very naturally into the heart of her brother, ever open as it was to kind and gentle influences. Ever too easily pained, also, as that heart was by ridicule, or condemnation, there was something almost necessary to its healthy pulsation in the fond companionship of a child who was utterly incapable as yet of recognising anything weak or absurd in the words or actions of a brother so beloved—so almost revered. What inexpressible consolation may arise out of this fact, let those ask themselves who have turned in their moments of wounded feeling—which are often moments of suffering self-love,—who have turned at such moments to the faithful affection of a child, or even of a dumb animal, and felt themselves rich in that possession. May not this fact include a deep secret lying at the foundation of other attachments besides that of a brother to his younger sister?

From pure gratitude, then, if from no other cause, Seymour felt peculiarly bound to his youngest sister, and with her much of his leisure time was spent; for though his thoughts generally took a range far beyond what hers could follow, yet, from her very childishness and simplicity she avoided jarring upon his tastes, or even interrupting his meditations. Her constant prattle,—and it must be owned that it was constant,—was rather like the song of the bird in the forest, the hum of the wandering bee, or the ripple of the mountain brook, which though continual, rather harmonise with, than disturb, the reflections of the silent traveller as he treads the solitudes of Nature.



CHAPTER III.

The studious child, of manners mild,
Unfitted for the rude rough sea;
To preach and pray, and show the way
To Heaven, were meeter destiny.

SUCH was the intimacy established between Seymour Clifton and his little sister, that seldom were they seen apart, except when his studies required a degree of close attention which her lively spirit could not well endure. Still less, however, could she bear to be the cause of vexation to one so tenderly beloved; and less even than this did she like to sit still and hold her tongue.

So when Seymour was at his studies, Kitty was free to roam the garden, or the farm-yard, where she found infinite amusement in the young animals with which she

secretly cultivated an intimacy almost as close as with her brother. In fact, nothing which had life, and youth, and tenderness, came amiss to Kitty, from a calf to a rabbit, a chicken to a gosling; or, if it must be owned, a litter of very juvenile pigs. When Seymour approached her, while in the act of nursing one of these, she did feel rather ashamed; but she would always leave the most exquisite little pet to walk with him, even along those almost silent rambles in which he sometimes scarcely responded to her prattle. But it seemed to be all the same to Kitty. She could hold his hand, and look up into his face, and even guide his feet sometimes, for her brother had a strange habit of not observing exactly where his feet were treading. So the child

actually led him after her own fashion, sometimes a little astray from the path he had been intending to pursue.

It happened one day, and, perhaps, for the first time in his life, that Seymour was going to some place where he did not wish that his sister should accompany him. Perhaps the way was too long, or the evening was too far advanced. At all events, he told Kitty so many times to return to the town, and all without effect, 'that at last he spoke sharply, and said he did not want her companionship just then. Instantly her little lip began to quiver, and a gush of bitter tears as quickly followed. Seymour wiped them off, and kissed the child, and told her she should have a long ramble with him on the following day. So Kitty sat down sobbing on the branch of a fallen tree, and said she would be a good child, and go home, only she must sit there a little while,—Seymour supposed to recover herself, which was all very natural.

Seymour walked steadily on for a little distance, only once or twice looking back to his sister with a smile and a nod. At last his path turned round the corner of a hedge, and he was lost to her view. The boy might well not want either of his sisters, still less his brothers with him on that occasion, for he was tracing a path which he had already trod before to a little village conventicle, where a poor old man, in whom he had become deeply interested, had first induced him to go, by telling him that a few good people met there once a week to praise God and pray.

Strange! that to so young a boy there should be any temptation in a place where God was to be praised and prayed to! Yet so it was. Seymour saw all the absurdity of the act, as his doing it would appear in the eyes of others; he felt all the coarseness of the scene, and its associations; but there was just one thing which his often-wounded soul seemed ever pining for, and never yet had found, and that was fellowship in earnest communion with his God. It was not that his family were by any means an irreligious family—rather the contrary; but his soul was unsatisfied. It was not that Seymour, in practical virtue, was at all more exemplary than others in such matters as resignation of his own will, patience, long-suffering;

even in charity he sometimes seemed wanting when he spoke of cruelty and wrong; but in his nature there had been implanted that earnest and insatiable longing after a more spiritual life, which cannot always associate itself commendably with the necessary business of this; especially in the season of youth, before the character is deeply experienced, and has learned the inestimable advantage of being able to live as it were two lives, by blending both in one. An earnest religious youth seems often to want actually to escape from the body. Hence those habits of neglect of health, and even punishment of the poor body, to which so many earnest but mistaken zealots have resorted in their eagerness to live only in, and for, the soul. It is in the later stages of experience we learn that the body may be used as a worthy instrument, and so with that also that God may be glorified.

Seymour Clifton was far from having arrived at this stage of wisdom. He was, in his natural tenderness of character, eminently a devotee; but he would more easily have thrown himself into a convent, and inflicted upon himself almost any amount of bodily suffering, than he would have discharged a vulgar duty, or yielded a favourite position to another, especially to one whose mental capabilities and powers of appreciating he considered inferior to his own. Well, indeed, might people say, How was Seymour Clifton ever to get through the world?

Even with all his serious earnestness, Seymour was a little ashamed of entering the low place in which the small company were convened whose evening worship he had gone to join; nor could he turn his face to the door, without glancing hastily round him; for the humble edifice stood in the main street of the village, if street it might be called. As he did so, a boy with a broad, laughing countenance, peeped at him, he fancied, from the window of a neighbouring house; and the face, he thought, too, was like that of his brother Philip, but he could not be sure. He entered, however, with very little discomposure, for that evening more than usual, his thoughts were in unison with the purpose for which the few hardworking humble people who summoned him there had

met. Seymour knelt down with the rest upon the rough stone floor, and sat with them in an undistinguished place upon the same deal forms. He did not care for things of this kind. Indeed he would have knelt on thorns if he could have enjoyed in no other position that communion of heart which he had so recently found, or fancied that he found, in the audible language of prayer; but he did care for the coarse expressions, the untuned voices, and the sometimes vulgar and familiar appeals to the Supreme Being which jarred upon his ear, and made him actually look round, more than once, to see if the broad laughing face was not looking in at the door.

This, however, was only in the early part of the service. Before its conclusion, Seymour had forgotten everything except that he had an eternal destiny to fulfil; and tears were streaming down his cheeks, while he lifted up his heart in fervent prayer that he might walk this earth as one of the Saviour's chosen flock, even though he might be called to pass through tribulation, persecution, or martyrdom itself. Yes, this poor, weak boy, was one of those who would have walked unflinchingly towards the fiery stake; but was he one who could walk the earth as it is, or tread the busy ways of men without failing in heart or hope, or losing sight of the Star of eternal glory?

Seymour Clifton arose from his devotions so entirely subdued in spirit, that he could shake cordially by the hand any members of that humble community who might choose to come forward and address the young gentleman; and as might be supposed they almost all did so, for after ascertaining that he went there to pray, and not to scoff, their welcome was certainly not the less cordial because his coat was of finer material than their own. Amongst others, a grave young woman came forward. At first Seymour did not recognise her face, but on looking a second time, he saw she was an inmate of the farmhouse in which he had found a temporary home, and he shook hands with her, too, for at that moment the company around were all immortals to him, and might have worn actual glories round their heads without any impropriety in his eyes.

It is surprising, however, how soon the

soul may be compelled to return to earth, after its most elevated aspirations. Just at that moment—the very moment when Seymour had relinquished the hand of the grave, hard-working girl, an explosion of laughter was heard at the door of the conventicle, so loud, and so violent that Seymour almost leapt from the ground. It is needless to say that the glories instantly departed; the humble worshippers were converted into a company of vulgar and very common-place people, with whom the son of a gentleman had no business to associate himself; and while the other members of the community only sighed and turned peaceably away, as if accustomed to this kind of persecution,—some of them as if rather rejoicing in it than otherwise,—Seymour was struck dumb with shame and confusion, and could only make his escape from the place by an effort which sent the blood into his cheeks, making him look like anything rather than a mild and patient devotee. How indeed was Seymour Clifton to get through the world?

The question now was, however, how was Seymour Clifton ever to get home? for that the laugh was, in part, at least, his brother Philip's laugh, he had not the shadow of a doubt; and whatever reproof he himself might choose to administer on the impropriety of making game of a religious service, wherever it might be conducted, he sought through his mind in vain for any plea which might justify his shaking hands with a servant girl. The unlucky individual, too, would be so constantly before him in pursuing her domestic avocations, and Philip was so unscrupulous in his raillery, that poor Seymour felt as if he had fallen irrevocably into a pit of disgrace, from which it would be impossible ever to escape.

It is very possible that the religious frame of mind in which Seymour had gone out that evening, would scarcely have left a trace of its own nature to mark his return, had not one circumstance awaited him, which, though natural and simple enough in itself, his imagination converted into a pleasing omen that he would never be utterly forsaken or borne down in his attempts to walk according to that spiritual life, now, as it were, just dawning in his soul.

As the boy pursued his solitary way, in

no very pleasant mood, he looked back at times, to see whether he was followed, as he fancied he might be, by a party of rioting and hooting boys; and he looked about him also, in the apprehension that he might be waylaid and pounced upon by such a party, headed by his brother Philip. As to his little sister, all had been forgotten of a tender and affectionate nature, so that not even when he drew near to the spot where he had caused her tears to flow, did his thoughts recur to any object so pleasing, or so dear, as her tiny form.

The moon was just rising as Seymour approached this spot,—the full broad moon of a midsummer evening,—and the half-shadow and half-daylight which still lingered over the earth, threw all objects into a kind of mysterious obscurity, with which Seymour would have amused and interested himself, under ordinary circumstances. Now, however, he had no capability of being amused by anything; but he could not help being struck with an appearance of something which looked soft and white beside the very bough on which his little sister had sat down to cry. It looked like a lamb, Seymour thought, but it must be a dead lamb, or why should it remain there alone, so far separated from the flock, which he had left quietly reposing on the opposite side of the field? Stooping down, and looking more intently, the boy perceived that the lamb was no other than his favourite of the family fold,—no other than his little sister Kitty, sleeping there, with her head resting on the bough for her pillow.

It was a beautiful sight; for the moon had then risen so high that her slanting beams fell directly on the countenance of the child, always lovely, because so much beloved by him who gazed silently upon it. Seymour shrank from awaking the little sleeper, and yet the dew was falling, so that every leaf and blade of grass already glistened in the moonlight.

"So you waited for me, little dear one, did you," said Seymour, "all this long while?" and he stooped down, and kissed the already cold cheek of the sleeper, with a warm feeling of gratitude, mingling with his affection.

It was surprising how much strength, as well as consolation, Seymour derived from this circumstance. To think that

his sister loved him well enough to wait for him all that long while, operated like a cordial to his sinking spirit; and, taking her up in his arms, still half unconscious as she was, he pursued his way, even with this additional burden, more lightly than before.

But, Seymour's trials were not over yet. He had to brave the jeering of his brother Philip as soon as he entered the house. This was what he expected, and had nerved himself to bear. In addition to this, however, he had to endure what was much worse, the cool and manly scorn of his brother Robert, who would not believe the story told by Philip, to be more than half true, if true at all.

"Nonsense," said Robert, when he grew tired of the perpetual teasing which Philip inflicted on his sensitive brother. "We have had quite enough of this, Philip. Now hold your tongue. That Seymour might look into such a place from curiosity I do not doubt, but that he should make such a fool of himself as to join these people in their devotions, I do not believe; still less that he should use the familiarity you talk of to a servant girl. I don't believe it, Philip, the thing is impossible; so now let us talk about something else. Where shall we go to-morrow?"

"Seymour will be fetching the cows home to be milked, I should think," said Philip; "seeing his fondness for the blooming Polly."

A box on the ear from his brother Robert, more playful than severe, was all the reply which this allusion elicited. Seymour was silent—very silent, and very sad. What should he do? Robert evidently did not believe the story in half its absurdity, and was ready to forget it altogether. "Why," thought Seymour, "should I not allow him to forget it—why should I awaken in his mind that contempt for myself, which from him would be almost as dreadful as death? Philip may think of me as he likes. He is a spiteful, vulgar fellow." And with that the fair forehead of the suffering boy contracted, and a scowl grew over his otherwise beautiful countenance. Something strange arose within his heart in connection with this look. Could it be hatred of his brother? Poor Seymour. he had urgent need to watch as well as

pray; but his natural tendency was to prayer, not watchfulness.

Was it possible that Seymour could hate any one, especially a brother? And he so loving, and so fond of being loved. A single kind word, a single considerate act, on the part of Philip would at any time have melted his heart, and brought back all his better feelings; but Philip knew nothing about such feelings. Being teased and laughed at made no impression upon him. If any one opposed, interrupted, or otherwise annoyed him, his tendency was to knock them down; but they might laugh as much as they liked—that could never hurt him. This boy was destined for the church.

It is possible that this early dedication of Philip to an office which, above all others, Seymour would have chosen for himself, had something to do with increasing those fits of petulance which the boisterous mirth, and the rude unsparing railery of this boy called forth on the part of his brother. Seymour was now quite old enough to draw comparisons between their separate destinations, and if something like envy, at such times, thrilled through his heart, it was not much to be wondered at; for just in proportion as he feared and hated his own doom, he sighed for the peaceful serenity, and the picturesque or rural calm of the lot to which his brother was consigned. But strict and irrevocable to them was the household law, and they had nothing left but to submit. Robert, too, was in the habit of speaking about willing and cheerful submission, as if it was the only way of acting consistently with a noble and manly spirit. It was his way; if he rebelled, he would rebel openly, determinedly, and to some purpose. A constant murmuring of mind, without open rebellion, was very despicable in his opinion; and he told his brother Seymour this plain truth, without any polishing or wrapping-up in pleasant flattery; and Seymour felt, when he did so, that nobody understood him.

Thus, with Robert, too, Seymour grew by degrees to feel estranged and separate, more especially since the time when he suffered his brother to pronounce him incapable of doing what he really had done, but wanted the courage to avow. What Seymour suffered from this circum-

stance no words could have described, even had he attempted to lay bare the secrets of his heart. He had not actually told a falsehood, but he had meanly shrunk from telling the truth. What would Robert think of him when he found this out, as he certainly would; for Philip reminded him of the fact continually, not without occasional reproaches for the "sneaking" way in which he had evaded a confession of the truth.

And Seymour felt so wicked all this while, and he wanted to be so good! He felt so far estranged from God, and heaven, and holy things, and he wanted to be so near! Ah! how was he ever to get through the world? How, indeed, except for One who has said, "Come unto me all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Thus Seymour Clifton was fast growing into an unsocial, abstracted, and, at times it must be owned, a somewhat peevish boy—so unlike, his mother said, the kind and gentle child he used to be in infancy! She thought he had been too tenderly treated on account of this gentleness, and she consulted with her husband, but far more frequently with her other friends, as to the mode of discipline to be applied, imagining the case to be one which demanded more severity. "The sea," people said, "would cure all." The mother thought the same, and negotiations were already going on with the uncle, in the hope of ensuring his patronage for the boy.

In the mean time there came a looker-on upon the Clifton family, one who observed with gentle wisdom, and who was not long in arriving at the conclusion that she understood the circumstances and feelings of the boy better than either of his parents. This observer was an unmarried aunt on the father's side, best known to the children by the name of "Aunt Ann." Hitherto their knowledge of this lady was very slight, owing to her having lived in a distant part of the country, but lately she had come to live nearer London, and her visits to the villa consequently became more frequent. Hitherto the little Cliftons had not known exactly whether they liked, or feared, or, as Philip boldly said, "despised" their Aunt Ann; for though a delicious box of sweetmeats generally accompanied her portmanteau

into the house whenever she arrived, there was a good deal of hushing of their boisterous play, and some extra fault-finding all the time the visitor remained. Not that Aunt Ann by any means required this of her nephews and nieces; but maternal discipline is not inapt to lay hold of any visitor as a pretext for tightening the reins which a single hand is not always equal to the task of holding. Thus, we have known other visitors besides Aunt Ann made, quite unintentionally, objects of painful apprehension to the minds of the young. Nor do visitors alone come in for this distinction. Some of those changes in life which necessarily occur, particularly having a governess, or going to school, are made the grand instruments of chastisement which the mother triumphantly brandishes over the heads of her children, never dreaming that even if the good of her own child were all she had to consider, this also would be a mistake, and a very dangerous one too.

Thus far Aunt Ann very unconsciously and undeservedly had acted as the domestic whip in Mrs. Clifton's hand. Robert, notwithstanding, liked his aunt, and had the courage to avow it. Seymour liked her in his heart, but had a strong predisposition to think she was always on the point of finding fault with him, though she seldom did. Philip liked her so long as the box of sweetmeats lasted, but after these were consumed, he always discovered that his aunt was only an old maid, and that she wore a little scrimping cap that might have served for Kitty's doll.

But the girls were now beginning to have an opinion on such matters as well as the boys, and Helen stood by her aunt most faithfully, while Kitty looked at her rather more in doubt, thinking sometimes that she really could love her exceedingly if quite sure that she would not find fault with Seymour. Once or twice, however, the aunt had spoken to Seymour in a tone of voice which Kitty thought severe, and that at a time when nobody else was blaming him at all. This seemed very hard to one who had already acquired the habit of thinking every moment of happiness enjoyed by her brother a moment gained; and every one a moment lost, or worse than lost, in which he was made to suffer pain. Foolish

little Kitty! your favourite must suffer. a good deal of pain yet, before he will be able to enjoy happiness, even if he can find it.

That there is a very narrow walk for a spinster lady in the household of any managing mother, and, especially, when that manager is a brother's wife, all will allow who know anything of human life, with its strange varieties of aspect and detail. Of this fact no one could be more fully aware than Aunt Ann; and little, indeed, would she have deserved the title of "meddler" in any family. Wherever she might be, her presence was felt, but not her interference. It was felt even in its silence, in the application of an apt and clever hand to whatever had to be done towards rendering every one at ease, and comfortable in themselves; and in a secret power of restraint and guidance which she exercised unknown to herself, upon all who met her without prejudice, and were not above opening their hearts to her mild and salutary influence.

We are not prepared to say that Aunt Ann was particularly imposing in her appearance, or that her taste in dress was without flaw. Something must be granted her on the side of imperfection—she herself would have asked for a great deal, for no one knew so well as she did all the hard struggles she had had to maintain before attaining her present position of apparent repose; no one knew so well as she did how often some of the old battles had to be fought over again even yet; nor how often her heart was ready to faint within her at the thought of how possible it was to suffer shipwreck even while drawing near to the long wished-for haven.

Amongst those natural weaknesses, or faults, as she would have called them, of which Aunt Ann was so sensible, might have been reckoned a little faint-heartedness, for we know of no better name to give it. It was not want of faith,—no, that was strong, and never failing; but something which had grown in very early life out of her deep conviction of personal unworthiness, and perhaps also, out of some circumstances which had strengthened and confirmed this conviction. It was something, which, speaking within her soul, was apt to say, "And will God indeed hear such a one as I am?" but then she always turned trustingly to that blessed

book, without which it is difficult to conceive how such natures exist at all in such a world as ours.

Perhaps it was in part this constitutional tendency of Aunt Ann's which enabled her at times to understand her nephew Seymour Clifton when no one else appeared to understand him, not even his little sister and pet; she, poor child, was far indeed from comprehending the peculiarities, and still less the morbid feelings of her brother. Something of the lights and the shadows of his character she could see, but why they came she never knew; only, as in many cases besides hers, a sort of internal sense, that blessed gift to woman, enabled her to see, as if with spiritual glance, when the light was shining, and where the shadows fell.

Aunt Ann saw more; but she was always slow to make advances towards intimacy, lest such advances on her part should be unwelcome; so she waited for Seymour to feel a want of her sympathy, or a want of her companionship, before she offered either; and, in the mean time, she came not too frequently to the villa, lest from living near, her visits should grow into a weariness, if not actually an intrusion. Had this good lady known now well-timed her visits sometimes were, she would scarcely have been so sparing of them. Especially one day, when on entering the drawing room at the villa, she perceived with her gentle, but almost instinctive glance, that Seymour was in some unusual degree of trouble, though no one else had paid the slightest attention to the silent boy.

It happened that day that Philip had been making one of those boisterous appeals to his mother, which he was accustomed to present in so many different forms, chiefly of the most unreasonable description, that he seldom obtained what he called "a patient hearing," and often expressed his astonishment at the small amount of attention which his applications obtained for him. Indeed he had acquired, perhaps from this very reason, a trick of thrusting, pushing, or otherwise applying a degree of animal force to his arguments, or persuasives, which elicited in return many a loud "Don't!" with sometimes a sharp slap,—not too sharp, however, for a prudent caution came to be exercised by

all the household who had ever felt the practical retort of this young Hercules.

On the occasion alluded to, Philip stopped suddenly in his play, and, looking up into his mother's face, said, with more gravity than was natural to him, "Must I really be a—what do you call it—parson, mamma?"

"Not parson, my dear," said Mrs. Clifton, with some warmth,—"a clergyman, you mean?"

"Yes," said the boy, "of course I mean that. But I suppose it is all the same.—Must I really be a clergyman, mamma?"

"Why, to be sure you must," replied the mother. "What else would you be?"

"I should like to be a bush-ranger, I think," said Philip, "a deer-stalker, or something of that kind."

"What nonsense you are talking, child!" said Mrs. Clifton, diligently pursuing her work, as if she heard nothing worth attending to.

"I tell you what," said Philip, as if recollecting suddenly that there were more ways than one of conducting an attack, "I tell you what, that soft Seymour of ours is exactly cut out for the Church; why don't you make a parson of him?"

"Nonsense!" again said the mother, as she replenished her needle with a fresh piece of thread.

Seymour was sitting all the while near one of the windows of the same room, with a book in his hand, which he had been intently reading. To his brother Philip's accustomed prattle he was in the habit of paying very little regard; but no sooner had the subject of the Church been touched upon, than he listened to every word and sound, which might help to elucidate the doubt perpetually floating in his mind, as to whether there remained a chance for him ever to escape the doom so frightfully impending over him. "And now," thought he, "if Philip would only enforce this point, let him make me as soft as he likes,—call me coward, fool, anything; only get me once into his place, and they shall see."

"You don't mean," said Mrs. Clifton, "that your brother is silly, I suppose, by *soft*. I think his tutors and all who have had anything to do with him, would give him a different character from that."

"Oh, not silly," said Philip, "as a scholar, or anything of that kind. I dare

say, he would beat me there; but silly, as girls are—frightened, stupid, *soft*. You know what I mean. He will never make a sailor, of that I am quite sure. It is no use trying to make him one."

"But he must be one, now," said the mother, with a firmness of tone, which ran like electric fire through the brain and nerves of him who sat apart, still looking down upon his book.

"Why must he *now*?" asked Philip, laying stress upon the last word.

"You are so teasing," said his mother.

"Just tell me *that*," persisted Philip, "and I will ask you no more. Why must Seymour now?"

"Because," said the mother again, in her firm grave voice, "steps have been taken, and negotiations entered into, which cannot be recalled."

"Pooh!" said Philip, and he turned away to scamper down the garden, where he happened just then to see his sisters walking.

All was silent in the room after the noisy boy was gone. Mrs. Clifton looked once, and only once, towards the spot where Seymour remained seated. She was convinced he had not been attending to what was said, or if he had, that it made no impression upon him; so she stitched away with the utmost satisfaction, while her son, as she supposed, pursued his studies with the same.

Poor Seymour! had his mother looked more narrowly, she might have seen the big tears coursing one another down his cheeks, and falling upon the page, on which he could no longer discover one intelligible word. What, in fact, was the use of reading if he could? What was the use of anything? He had a great mind to go out and hang himself.

But a gentle step came in, and a kind "Good morning" to Mrs. Clifton, soon recalled him to himself.

Aunt Ann was naturally backward to obtrude her sympathies; but she had seen the sad countenance of the silent boy, and that was enough for her. "Seymour," she said, approaching the window where he was seated, "I believe I must disturb you a moment, for I want to see what Robert has been building in the garden, and I don't know that I can find it myself. Don't trouble yourself, sister, we shall be back in a few minutes."

"If you would excuse me this morning," said Mrs. Clifton, resuming her work; "I am rather busy."

So Seymour and his aunt went out into the pleasant garden, and they looked at the opening flowers, and discussed the merits of a newly planned walk, and observed that the little fountain did not play so well that day as usual; but neither of them for some time ventured upon any other topic.

At last the Aunt said kindly, and she laid her soft white hand upon the shoulder of the boy as she spoke, "Seymour, when a duty has to be done, don't you think doing it in earnest makes it easier?"

"Yes," Seymour replied, "when it is a duty."

"Ah! that makes a great difference," said his Aunt.

"I think," said Seymour, "if I knew—knew positively—knew as if God had spoken it, that it was my duty to die to-day by some frightful and horrible death, I could do it without a murmur; but a common affair of *interest*, as people call it, which sounds to me always like pride and selfishness mixed together—a common affair of noise and battle, and swearing, and tumult—oh, dear Aunt I have no heart for this kind of thing, because I cannot hear the voice of God in it."

"The voice of God, my child, is often a still small voice, speaking through different channels, and sometimes through a parent's wish—is it not so, Seymour?"

"It may be so. I often say to myself, it may be so even in this instance. I think it is chiefly the doubt I feel about whether it is so or not which distresses me so much. Don't you think, dear Aunt, that a parent, with the best intentions in the world, may make a great mistake?"

"But, Seymour, there is one great Parent above all, who makes no mistakes, nor suffers any to be made which He is not able and willing to overrule for good."

"Do you think, then, that any good will ever come out of my going to sea?"

"That will depend upon yourself. You can serve God on the great waters as well as on the land. You can pray to Him there, as well as in your own chamber. If you enter upon this life from a sense of duty, depend upon it He will never forsake you."



CHAPTER IV.

The foaming waves come rolling in,
Oh, haste! a place of safety win;
So in life's troubles may you meet
Firm ground whereon to plant your feet.

IN conversation with her husband, when she could catch his ear, but more frequently in her own private meditations, it was a source of great self-gratulation to Mrs. Clifton that her children were going on so well, and so much after her own plans and wishes; for those who have strong faith in their own previsions, seldom see, until very late, that their plans are not likely to succeed.

Robert Clifton had obtained high honours at school, though in a line about as distant from his business occupations as could well be; Seymour was much commended for his attainments as a classic scholar, which also had not much to do with the purposes for which he was to live; Philip—she could not say much for Philip's character at school, to be sure, for he had fallen under heavy penalties for disobedience and conduct generally

bad; but he was a fine fellow, the mother thought, notwithstanding, and would do exceedingly well at another school, no doubt. She had just heard of one where the discipline was much more strict, and to that he was about to be sent. Then there was Helen, growing every year more beautiful,—a fine, tall, noble-looking creature. To be sure, her manner was far from easy, but that was owing to the school she had been at, this time, for one whole year and a-half; she, also, was about to make a change. And Kitty—the mother could not in her conscience even whisper to herself that this, her youngest child, was walking, or likely to walk, in the way she was intended to go; for, instead of poring perpetually over learned books, as had been designed and expected, Kitty was much more frequently detected with a kitten in her lap, or her canary let loose that it might perch upon her head, or even with a doll, carried out to take an airing, when she had no better company. Kitty, in fact, was nothing,

and seemed as if she could be nothing of and by herself. Like a fitting shadow, she moved about the footsteps of others, now reflecting one form of character and then another; but almost vanishing away when there was no sphere of sympathy to live in, no other life to exist upon besides her own. And this little girl was to make a learned woman—to stand alone—to create a foundation for herself!

Could the two sisters, as well as the two brothers, have changed their minds and persons, the mother's schemes might have answered better for them, for Helen, quite unexpectedly to Mrs. Clifton, and for some time unknown to her, evinced a tendency to what are called dry and abstract studies, rather unusual in a girl of her age. Indeed when these attainments were first spoken of in a letter which Mrs. Clifton received from the principal of the school to which Helen had been sent, the mother did not believe it, but thought it must be a mistake. She had never read of any beauty having this propensity, unless it was Lady Jane Grey—and her fate was not the most encouraging—certainly none of those fictitious characters which figure in romances. There the plain-looking are the clever, and such books are said to afford the truest representations of real life. The thing was unnatural—it could not be. At all events, if it was so, learning at that rate would spoil Helen's figure as well as her complexion. Mrs. Clifton called to mind a good many learned people, who were all bilious and heavy-looking. This would never do for Helen; she must apply more to her music and her dancing. Mrs. Clifton believed a good deal of the fault was there. Helen must be sent to another school, where her dancing would be more attended to. As for Kitty, she was very young yet; but Mrs. Clifton was already in treaty with a master, who was to come to the villa three times a week to teach the youngest Miss Clifton Latin.

So, on the whole, the Cliftons were getting on quite hopefully, the mother thought; and a hopeful family they certainly would have been, had a little more rational attention been bestowed upon the capabilities which Nature had so kindly, and, in some instances, so lavishly bestowed upon them. They were certain-

getting on in the usual way, by growing up to men and women,—and very much taking their chance as to what kind of men and women they would be,—when a change, at first slight and little thought of, came across their family arrangements.

Mr. Clifton, like many other gentlemen immersed in business, was in the habit of fasting all the day, and returning late to eat a hearty dinner,—at which he sometimes did eat rather more than inclination dictated, on the principle that, having fasted so long, he must make up for it by double duty at his own table. Mrs. Clifton held the same opinion, and if anything could be got to tempt his appetite, or to awaken an agreeable surprise, under which he might be induced to eat a little more than usual, both were of opinion that a great good had been attained, and the experiment was tried again with renewed assiduity. In process of time, artificial aids were resorted to. Popular pills, of infinite variety, were taken; but still Mr. Clifton did not feel himself quite the thing. In fact, a sort of vertigo frequently attacked him when stooping or turning quickly round. This was said to arise out of sheer weakness;—he wanted more support, more nourishment must be got into the system. So Mrs. Clifton set about, with great alacrity, to devise schemes, for having this extra nourishment provided, and conveyed in such a manner as that her husband might eat often,—just when he felt faint, or in want of support. He did so, and he ate his late dinner, provided in great abundance, too, and he was no better.

Mr. Clifton made no complaint. He was thinking about his business all the while. The giddiness in his head was teasing to him; that was all. One of his doctors—for, like the schools to which his children went, they were many—one of his doctors said that he applied too closely and wanted relaxation. So Mr. Clifton dined out more frequently, and had more company at home, and still he was no better. Indeed, whether the wines were unsatisfactory, or whether it was from some strange dish, or some other unknown cause, Mr. Clifton felt usually the worse for these dinners, and for two or three subsequent days suffered more from the giddiness in his head. But what could he

do?—this was the only relaxation he knew of, as lying within his reach. What could he do?

In a lucky moment for the children, some one suggested the sea-shore; so away the family all went to the southern coast for one whole month, and all were to be together, except Robert, now a fixture at his desk in the office; but even he was to spend his Sundays with his brothers and sisters, and sometimes even the Saturday or Monday too.

The sea, Mr. Clifton secretly thought, was well enough for those who had nothing to do; but how was he to get the time over, strolling about idle on a sandy shore? However, he made the best he could of his circumstances, and only returned to his business for three days in each of the weeks that he professed to be away.

To the children these four weeks afforded a very happy time to look back to in their after lives,—not the less happy, even at the moment of enjoyment, for the conviction, felt by each, that they were not very likely soon to meet all together, in the same manner, even if they ever should meet again on earth. With a good deal of external freedom and familiarity of manner, a good deal of roughness, at times, on the part of Philip, the young Cliftons were still warmly and faithfully attached to each other, and wanted no other companions, unless when something had gone wrong with them in temper, or some accidental trial had occurred. That things did go wrong with them sometimes it is scarcely necessary to say, for out of the very familiarity of childhood and youth there almost necessarily arises some jarring or irritation of temper. It is experience alone which remedies this evil, by teaching us to judge by our own feelings, in the many wounds they have received, how far it is desirable or safe to go with others. Hence, those families who are early separated by what the world calls misfortune, and who are thus sent out each to work his separate way amongst strangers, generally learn this lesson soonest, and come back, whenever they can meet beneath a parent's roof, with the most lively affection, good nature, and forbearance.

The Cliftons had never been separated yet; but they were all looking into a future, in which a wide separation, indeed,

was to take away from them one whom all loved, though he was understood by none. Whatever there might have been at times, in the temper or morbid sensitiveness of Seymour Clifton, to vex or disappoint the rest of his family, he was now so near departing from the paternal roof, so near being consigned to a hard, severe, and, at best, a very precarious fate, that a more than usual amount of tenderness was called forth at times towards him; and while none but Philip suffered the subject so much as to escape their lips, there was a marked attention shown by all towards this brother, which often brought unbidden tears into his eyes, while it had the melancholy effect of making his separate doom appear more hateful and more terrible than before.

These fits of sadness, however, scarcely could be long or frequent, under present circumstances. The children were so young, and youth is so happy when roaming at large amongst rocks, and waves, and shells, and sea-weed, with a bright sky overhead, and a great towering cliff, shutting them off from all the world, and making them feel to be the undisputed possessors of a whole world of their own.

There was nothing in this kind of life—not even the little rural conventicle, to vex or annoy the happy family. The cause of their being where they were, was no trouble to them, for none amongst them had the slightest apprehension of anything serious in their father's indisposition; so they enjoyed themselves to their hearts' content, only that Seymour felt sometimes a sudden gasp of apprehension respecting his approaching fate, like what a bather feels who does not like the water, but knows that in a few moments he must plunge in.

Still, though outward circumstances were so pleasant, Seymour found his personal troubles even here; where would he not find them? It happened one day—it was a great day to all, for Robert was allowed to remain—it happened that on his account, chiefly, a long ramble had been planned, in which Robert was to be the conductor. Mrs. Clifton felt no fear as this was to be the case, and her husband being that day in town, she granted full permission to the juvenile party to go wherever Robert might choose to lead

them, only stipulating that she might be made acquainted with their route, in order to meet them on their return, if so disposed.

The day was beautiful, the sea most brilliant. A fresh breeze played over the surface of the waves; while gray fleecy clouds, fringed with white, threw here and there a quickly passing shadow on the waters below, or on the jutting headlands that stretched out into the ocean, catching alternately the lights and shades of this imposing scene.

"The sea is beautiful, I think, dear Seymy, after all;" said Kitty, in a soft, low voice, as she clasped her brother's hand more closely in her own.

"Yes, it is very beautiful as a picture," Seymour replied, "and it is beautiful as God's work."

"And does not that make it beautiful to you?" asked the child. "You love God so much, dear Seymy."

"I wish I loved him better," was the somewhat sad reply. And the brother and sister walked on, not this time separated from the rest for more than a few moments now and then; for, as already stated, all felt, on this day especially, as if their approaching separation had made them dearer to each other.

For Robert it was a glorious day, and for Philip not less so. Both could enjoy themselves after the peculiar bent of their own minds. Robert, in idea, took the bearings of the land, built breast-works, thrust out the sea, and fortified a huge promontory in case of invasion, for the especial benefit of Philip, who seemed to have been born with a natural anticipation of war, and fighting, and mastery over some enemy, either foreign or domestic. Thus, when he and Robert built their castles in the air together, they were chiefly castles of defence, well manned, and supplied with ammunition enough to withstand the attacks of the whole world. And thus pleasantly accommodating themselves one to another, the party rambled on, Helen alone petitioning sometimes for a halt, in order that she might sit down in some quiet nook, and enjoy a delightful book which she had taken with her for that purpose, but which Philip threatened should be thrown into the sea, if she did bury herself in its pages.

People of one idea are not always the safest guides for a party; and even Robert Clifton, with all his good sense, was too much absorbed to see exactly what was taking place around him. On the present occasion, that glistening aspect of the morning which is so inexpressibly beautiful, gave place, as it almost always does, to the gathering of soft clouds into one general mass, so that the young travellers became almost simultaneously aware that the sun had hid his face, and that a dead green hue upon the waters had usurped the place of that exquisite light and shadow which, as it seemed but a moment before, had thrown into such brilliant contrast the soft waves and their snow-white foam.

Seymour stopped, and shuddered as he contemplated this scene. "Let us go back," said he. But Philip laughed, and shouted, and said he liked it better than before, and hoped the wind would rise, and send much bigger waves upon the shore than those which already ran up hissing around their feet.

For some time the party walked on, rather more silently than before. At last Kitty said in her most serious voice, "Isn't there a tide, brother Robert?"

Robert suddenly stopped, looked all around him, then at his watch, and then faced about, taking the hand of Kitty in one of his, and that of Helen in the other.

No word did Robert utter as he walked along which bore the slightest relation to tide, or wind, or water, or any kind of difficulty in which these elements are concerned. He spoke of shells, but he would not let his sisters stop and pick them up; of marine plants, but he led them along the higher part of the shore where nothing looked so fresh and sparkling as near the water's edge. Here he pointed out to them the different strata of the cliff, discussed the various formations and structures of the earth, and delivered quite a geological lecture, but would not allow of the gathering of a single specimen, or even of any relaxation of the speed at which he was walking, though it might have been for some practical elucidation of the truths he unfolded.

Seymour, all the while, followed closely, and kept silence. He knew the reason why his brother was hastening back in

this determined manner, and he had the good sense to keep it to himself; but he could no more have talked of other things, as Robert did, than he could have flown upon the wings of the sea-bird which skimmed past them; and yet this was the only way to act a part that was at once both manly and kind.

Philip, although he also directed his steps the same way, knew little about the reason why they should return, and cared less. To him there was infinite amusement any way, in clambering occasionally half way up the cliff, then overtaking the party by double speed; and then, when he did keep on the shore, tempting the capricious waves to follow and catch him if they could.

The waves were not so capricious, however, but that they gained rapidly and steadily upon the shore, so that a very narrow strip remained for the party to walk upon, compared with the space they had recently enjoyed. The sisters, if they noticed this at all, thought it was occasioned by the bend of the coast, for Robert had succeeded so well in his endeavours to inspire them with confidence, that so long as his voice remained cheerful, and his manner self-possessed, they entertained not a thought of danger, nor, indeed, were aware that any danger was at hand.

There was but one point—one little spot along the shore,—to which Robert attached any importance. Once safely past that, and all would be well. It was a little gully or creek, where the land was broken and irregular; and here, he very naturally thought, the sea would soonest reach the cliff. But then, here also, from the nature of the land, there might be a means of escape, by clambering up the side of the cliff. So Robert looked anxiously onward for this point, though he ceased not for a moment to amuse and interest his sisters, speaking all the time in the clearest, liveliest tones of his fine manly voice.

At last, on turning suddenly round a slight bend of the coast, the little hollow or bay became visible. Robert thought there was a good deal of white foam about it, and he could not see anything at all likely to prove a pathway above. Kitty, too, disturbed his composure by calling

out, "Look there, Robert, we shall have to wade through the water—I am quite sure we shall!"

"And if we have," said Robert, "what of that? Your little feet will skim through it like yon sea-bird; and as for Helen, I will carry her on my back."

The tone in which Robert spoke reassured his sisters again; so much so, that Kitty actually clapped her hands, exclaiming "That would be charming fun!" To which Robert replied by snatching her up playfully, as a sort of preliminary movement, and running with her nearly to the spot where the waves were already rolling in rather more than he had expected. He knew that when he did so the others would follow, and that thus a little time would be gained.

It appeared, on reaching this spot, that a very narrow passage, from rock to rock, was all that was necessary to be made good, in order to secure the safety of the whole party. There were some fragments of broken timber laid about, and many loose stones of considerable size. With these, it struck Robert, that he could very soon construct a sort of bridge, on which his sisters might pass over without so much as wetting their feet. He, therefore, placed Kitty on the sand, and telling them what he was about to do, busied himself immediately in collecting together such materials as he could find, the two girls helping him as well as they could.

But, where was Seymour all this while, and what was he doing? Robert was startled on turning round to catch a view of his countenance. It was absolutely white with terror and agony. From the first moment when the party turned back, he had given himself up to being swallowed in by the sea. Every roll of the waves, every burst of the heavy breakers, seemed like the roar of an enemy about to devour him in its horrid jaws. His sisters, too,—his brothers—almost all he loved best in the world—all appeared to him about to share the same dreadful doom; and so strong was this impression, so terrible the working of fear in his distempered mind, that the spectacle of what Robert was about, and the really trifling nature of the difficulty which they all had now to encounter, served in no

degree to dispel his fears, or to soothe the agony he was enduring.

Notwithstanding Robert's sound and excellent sense, he was a good while constructing his bridge, and the tide was gaining upon him all the time.

"You must make it very wide," said Kitty, looking on; "for see, Robert—do see—the water is rolling in there, too. If we had been quick, and gone over at once,——"

But before Kitty had done speaking, a loud voice called out—"What are you all about?"

"Building a bridge," screamed Kitty, for it was Philip who shouted to them from an elevated position which he had reached on the side of the cliff.

"They can't get this way, that's clear," said he, as he sprang down like a goat, and was soon upon the beach with the others.

Robert was still busy, very busy, indeed, so much so, that he failed to observe what was going on.

"Come, Kitty," said Philip, stooping down, "you spring upon my back."

"Take Helen first," whispered the child. "She is rather frightened. I am not at all."

So Philip snatched up his sister Helen, and carried her across, sometimes wading knee deep in the water, and sometimes edging towards the foot of the cliff, so as to escape the splash of a breaking wave.

Kitty watched the process with intense anxiety. She had just said she was not at all afraid; but her blanched cheek and quivering lip now told a different story. Her turn came, however, very quickly, for Helen was soon standing almost dry upon the shore, while Philip dashed back amongst the waves, really quite enjoying the exploit.

"You are very wet about the legs, dear Philip," said Kitty, in a most pathetic tone as he approached her. "Do you think I shall be wet, too? Is the water very cold?" she added, grasping his neck so tightly with her small arms that her brother declared he should be suffocated, if he was not drowned. But Kitty spoke no more, and she also was soon set safely down beside her sister Helen.

Robert, on awaking to a sense of what was going on, felt first surprised, then amused; and bursting into a loud laugh,

he threw down a block of stone intended for the foundation of his bridge, exclaiming as he did so, "What a fool I have been to stand here contriving, while you were acting!" After which he also dashed through the water, and was soon beside his sisters.

Seymour alone was now left. Had no previous terror filled his mind, he would have thought little more of crossing the water than his brothers thought of it; but when once his mind was taken possession of by this feeling, all attempts to call back anything like manly resolution were in vain. Utterly fruitless, then, were all the loud callings of his brothers to him to come over—all the imploring attitudes and gestures of his sisters. He who would have walked through the furnace had there been a moral cause for doing so, dared not trust himself to the shallow waves of the foaming sea, though he had just seen how lightly they might be encountered by others.

Robert wished, for Seymour's own sake, that he would come over unassisted, and therefore he called to him the more earnestly. But Seymour thought it was because of greater danger, and he was the more afraid to go. Philip had no such scruples about his brother's dignity and credit; but, dashing through once more, he snatched the terrified boy upon his shoulders and bore him harmless through. Indeed, to Philip the whole affair was so amusing, and so little fraught with anything like danger, that he could not refrain from his accustomed jokes at his brother's expense. So, carrying him on his back a great deal further along the shore than was necessary, he called out lustily—"Three cheers for the admiral!" and then, lifting him with all his might, acted the best representation he could of an electioneering chairing, with plentiful hurrahs and shouts, too, that startled the sea-gulls from the rocking waves.

This day, then, which had begun so pleasantly, only added another of those dark pages to poor Seymour's experience, which threatened to fill up, in a considerable degree, the volume of his life. But he was beginning to have practical things to think of that were enough, and sometimes a little too much, to fill each passing moment with its full snare of bitterness.

Though nearer and nearer drew the time of his departure from home, and more and more fixed the chains which were still not finally rivetted, Seymour made no absolute resistance, nor, in justice to his parents, it must be stated, ever made them really acquainted with the state of his own feelings on the subject. Those who observe little of human nature may think this improbable—those who watch it narrowly will know better; for how many voluntary victims may be found, even in the kindest families, who go on to their graves complaining that all things were against them in early life, when they never made any full and clear explanation at home, either of what were their own real wishes, or what were their sufferings from the wishes of others.

But with all this, Seymour was not learning the virtue of practical obedience. He was rebelling every moment in his heart, and working in many indirect ways with a hope that grew fainter every day as to any real good to be attained.

"Philip," said Seymour, one evening, as they strolled along the shore together, and he spoke very seriously, for his heart was heavy and sad,—“Philip, don't you think you could persuade papa and mamma to let you change places with me, even yet? I am sure you would make a better admiral than I ever shall.”

“And you a better parson than I shall make,” said Philip, laughing. “That's clear enough.”

“Then do try what you can do,” added Seymour.

“You are so very grave about the matter,” said Philip.

“It is a grave subject,” observed his brother, “in whatever light you look at it.”

“It doesn't seem so very grave to me.”

“Not yet, perhaps. But it will, I hope, sometime; that is, if you do take upon yourself the holy office you are contemplating.”

“Don't talk in that canting way, Seymy. It reminds me of the old conventicle. You know it is not in my nature to contemplate anything, as you call it; and as to a *holy* office, I never look at it in that light, or I should give the thing up at once.”

“And yet that is the only way to make the office either respectable in the sight of others, or tolerable to oneself. I know

I should think it holy, and should desire to think it so, if I were in your place.”

“Perhaps so; but you and I are very different.”

“That is the sole reason why I ask you now to make one last effort to bring about an exchange between us.”

“It would be of no use; not the least in the world.”

“But do try, dear Philip, just once. Do try, as you love me, and desire my happiness.”

“Why, look you, Seymy, you may take my pulpit any day, and preach in it as often and as long as you like. But as to the navy, I tell you what, my boy, I once caught a sight of that old uncle of ours, the admiral, with his goldheaded cane, and ruffled shirt, and gouty legs. Did you ever see him?”

“Yes, many times.”

“And did you like the look of him?”

“No, not at all.”

“Well, if my being an admiral must depend upon pleasing that old fellow, I can't do it, Seymy; and that's enough.”

“But can you do the other?”

“What?”

“Study for the Church?”

“I can go to college. I don't think the fellows there study much. They eat, and drink, and row—I can do all that with any of them.”

“But you must do something else, or you will be disgraced.”

“Not much of it, I fancy. Do you think Wellesborough studies, or Page, or Jackson?”

“They are not in the Church yet.”

“No, but they will be; and where they can pass, I can follow. At least it is so in riding, I know, and a little beyond them I can go at a leap.”

“And when you are in the Church, as you call it, Philip, what do you mean to do?”

“Oh! attend to parish business, to be sure; make myself comfortable; and shoot, when the season comes,—perhaps hunt a little too.”

Seymour could not help smiling at the difference of their tastes—at the wide extremes at which they lived in thought and feeling; but he felt secretly more disposed to sigh than smile, at the idea that this was all which entered into his

brother's calculations. He thought, too, with how much he himself would have invested the sacred office, had it been his privilege to contemplate it as his own. The subject was altogether a very sad one to him. Could his brother have been brought seriously to contemplate the change he proposed, so that the Church and the Admiralty might still have been retained in the family, all might have been well; but Philip, as he grew older, did not altogether dislike the comforts which his own destination had in store; and, therefore, he was wary about exchanging them for those which were less certain. In fact, as he grew older, it was evident that his own future grew less disagreeable in contemplation. Many other fine spirited fellows, he thought, went into the Church—it was a gentlemanly calling, at all events, and saved a man a good deal of trouble, in keeping up appearances.

But Philip has not got into the Church yet. There are a good many things to be done first. Above all, there is his college life to lead, for which, however, he is preparing as fast as a most patient tutor can prepare him; only that the boy has already got his head filled with dogs, and horses, races, and grooms; and the tutor finds them rather inconvenient, as well as boisterous companions, in the hours of study. Somewhat expensive, too, the young man's tastes begin to be, so that altogether it is a serious matter getting Philip Clifton into the Church.

To the oldest brother these tastes were becoming particularly serious, when considered in connection with the general circumstances of his family. Robert was now old enough to take these into calculation, and he did so with a gravity which often called forth a laugh from Philip at the "old man" as he was pleased to designate his brother. Such laughter, however, seldom lasted long, for Robert had something about him which equally disarmed ridicule, and commanded respect. Besides which, he had early become so responsible an agent in the pecuniary transactions of the household, that self-interest, if Philip ever acknowledged such an influence, dictated a manner calculated to conciliate, rather than offend, or repel.

Mr. Clifton, like many half-invalids,

unacquainted with the nature or the cause of their own malady, was becoming rather difficult to do with in the office, and often charged his son with blame which was wholly undeserved. The clerks were becoming dissatisfied, and often went to Robert to complain. The affairs of the business were falling into more confusion than Robert knew how to bring into order, scarcely even to understand. His father, too, forgot himself sometimes, but more frequently changed his mind without sufficient cause, giving orders and revoking them in a hurried, vacillating manner, which put every body out of temper, and himself most of all; so that poor Robert seemed to have a weight upon his young shoulders heavier at times than he knew how to bear. And all the while he did not like the business—almost hated it, and wished himself anywhere but in that dark dull office, amongst account-books, and invoices of things that were to him little better than filthy and disgusting; such as tallow, and other commodities, which, touched in detail, are supposed to degrade the character, but dealt with in the mass seem to give it dignity and worth.

Robert Clifton had so much to do with things of this kind, so little with his favourite objects of pursuit; he was so pressed down, too, by heavy galling cares, that a premature old age seemed to be creeping over him; and his once athletic form grew spare and meagre in its proportions. His face also was too pale and sharp for perfect health: and his heavy black hair sometimes cast a shadow over his fine brow so deep that a mother's heart might well have sunk within her at the sight. But Robert did not complain: he was only out of his element, that was all.

"That was all," the mother would have said; hundreds of grave-kind experienced friends would have said that was nothing compared with duty—duty to a well-regulated mind was paramount. Robert Clifton knew this as well as the gravest of them all—he knew it practically, for he acted upon it every day; but it made his cheek pale nevertheless—yes, and his heart a little heavy sometimes; but he was getting himself "schooled in," he said, and when youth was over, and those silly fancies which floated through his brain had all passed by, he should do very well.



CHAPTER V.

Pity the friendless, and repress
The unjust thought, the word severe ;
List to the story of distress,
And wipe away the falling tear.

IN pursuing the history of the Clifton family, we have now to imagine them occupying a residence in one of those popular places of resort on the southern coast, where visitors of every description, but chiefly those of delicate or failing health, are to be met with throughout the winter months.

Mr. Clifton was one of these, for his health had now seriously failed. Not that any particular disease had assailed his once vigorous frame, but those affections of the head which have already been described, had become so frequent and so severe, as to render an entire cessation of his accustomed occupations absolutely necessary. Under these circumstances the villa was let to other occupants, and the family, in the meantime, were making experiments, sometimes of inland places, such as Tonbridge-wells and Leaming-

ton, but more frequently of Brighton, and of such situations as afforded the greatest chance of meeting with old friends and acquaintances whose immediate intercourse with London brought with them, as it were, a certain odour of his past life to cheer the drooping spirits of the invalid.

In Mr. Clifton's case, it was really a misfortune that he did not feel himself ill. He had no pain ; he could eat and drink, and take almost endless exercise. "It was all nonsense," he often said, "keeping him tied down to idleness, thus wasting the very noontide of his existence ;" and many were the attempts he made to escape back again to his office in town, his ledger, and his bales of goods. Indeed, he had so long persisted in struggling, after his own fashion, to ward off the attacks to which he had become subject, that the most alarming consequences were apprehended by his family ; and after consulting some of the most eminent physicians, it was decided upon that none

but the most determined measures would be prudent to adopt in so critical a case.

It was well for Robert Clifton, and well indeed for his family, that, under these circumstances, he was able to call into exercise all that manly resolution and that high sense of duty, which formed the distinguishing features of his character. Robert was not so sublime in either of these characteristics, but that he could, and did, remember himself amongst other members of his family. Often and often, did the old feeling come over him—"Oh, that I was away from these black walls! away, and at liberty to follow out the original tendency of my mind and character." And often, it must be confessed, did the illness and incapability of his father, fall upon his heart with double weight, because it bound him down with greater necessity to the mental slavery which he was daily and hourly enduring.

Nor should we think the worse of Robert for this. As that boldness is not real courage which has no consciousness of danger; so that performance of duty is far from being magnanimous which includes no self-denial, no pining of the heart after what it would prefer to obtain possession of, at any cost, except the loss of honour, or the sense of right. It is those who feel strongly, to whom self-sacrifice is indeed a trial; for wherever there exists strong feeling, it will be found in a strong character, and to such self and self-love are words of no light significance. We cannot help fancying, sometimes, that a little too much merit is assigned to the virtue of silent suffering. Unquestionably there are cases in which to break this silence would be as mean-spirited in the sufferer, as it would evince a culpable neglect of the feelings of others. But if all suffering was silent, the selfish, the cruel, and the mean, would then be even worse than they are, reveling without restraint in their ill-gotten and unfair enjoyments. There is a delicate line for the strong and the noble-minded to observe between the two extremes of excessive murmuring, on the one hand, and a paltry and abject endurance on the other. Passion, in the strong, is perpetually overleaping this line, and thus it is passion, far more frequently

than want of principle, which robs them of their merit with the world.

Robert Clifton, happily for him, was so constituted and so self-disciplined, that passion had seldom exercised this dominion over his better feelings. His was one of those beautifully, but rarely proportioned characters, in which strong feeling exists under the power of self-command. It would be depriving him of half his merit, did we say that he never once thought of himself amongst all the noble efforts which he was called upon to make for others; for Robert did think very often and very painfully about himself. There can be no doubt, but, at times, he considered himself very ill-used by Fortune—he might even, in the depths of his soul, say Providence, instead of Fortune, sometimes; for there was stout rebellion there, and many battles had to be fought and fought again, as his position in life became in no respect more agreeable to him. Indeed the separation from his family, added to other circumstances, rendered it much more difficult than at first to endure with equanimity of mind.

Amongst other things which Robert, with his manly spirit felt severely, was this,—he was but a junior in his father's office; and with all the weight of responsibility weighing on his mind, his youth and inexperience still bound him down to an inferior and subordinate position. Beyond this, the business, altogether, was less prosperous than formerly. His father had known this, and in order to meet the changing tide, had ventured on some rather desperate speculations, the uncertainty of which had secretly preyed upon his mind, and no doubt greatly increased the malady under which he was suffering. These speculations had not been successful; but still they were not ruinous; and, failing in his object, Mr. Clifton still thought himself fortunate to escape the opposite extreme of absolute failure.

Thus it was in all respects rather a heavy yoke to which the young man of business succeeded; and he felt it the more because he had now no pleasant picturesque home to return to; no lovely garden for his Sundays in summer; no library window opening out amongst the flowering shrubs; no sweet sisters to welcome his return,

and beguile him of his heavy thoughts. His domestic life was now confined to dark dingy lodgings near the city. Robert cared not much where they were, if only cleanliness and quiet could be ensured; and these two requisites were difficult to find. He wanted no style or show, for who had he to share, or to enjoy, either with him? and alone there were few of the embellishments of life which he valued at their cost. Neither had he learned so far to relish the society of other young men, as to put himself to much expense or trouble on that account. All his leisure moments were devoted to his favourite studies. His sitting-room looked often like a workshop; and since he had no one to be domestic with, he appeared as if he cared not for being personally comfortable.

After making trial of many lodgings, and failing in the two requisites already mentioned, Robert was about to give the matter up in despair; for to him unsettlement was almost as great an evil as uncleanness; when he happened, as it seemed to him by a most lucky chance, to look into the apartments of a widow lady, whose general appearance was that of the highest respectability, and even nicety in dress and manner; whose house, too, on the very first entrance, looked inviting and homeish, as if an agreeable family, as well as a genteel one, might long have lived there.

On looking at these apartments, and enquiring about the terms, and other business matters, Robert thought he observed in the lady a trembling kind of vacillation between a somewhat unnecessary assumption of personal dignity, and an anxious fear lest the accommodation offered should not prove satisfactory. But while he and the lady went through these negotiations, not, it must be confessed, in the most business-like manner, a servant entered the room, and, walking directly up to the lady, placed a slip of paper in her hand, and retired without speaking.

"Oh!" said the lady, looking at the paper, and as if suddenly reminded again of an important part of her business; "I was to ask—or rather I do ask—if you have any particular objection to music?"

"Music! Oh dear no," said Robert; "if only it is good."

The lady drew herself up. "My

daughter"—she began, but suddenly stopped. "The piano," she went on to say, "is not very near; but you might hear it sometimes, and some gentlemen have a great objection to a piano."

"Close at one's ear, and continually strummed without tune or time," said Robert, "I do confess—"

But the lady had drawn herself up much higher than before, and a second time forgot herself so far as to commence with—"My daughter." A second time, however, she stopped and changed the subject by saying, "I was also to ask—or rather it is important to me as a lady to know—whether my household would be likely to be disturbed by late hours, much of the company of other young gentlemen, or anything of that kind?"

"A very proper question," said Robert, and very wisely suggested. I think I can answer it, however, as satisfactorily as most young men of my time of life. Indeed, though young in years, I am rather old and grave in my habits, and shall much more frequently be found engaged with workmen's tools, than giving wine parties."

"I beg your pardon," said the lady; "but if that be the case, I should scarcely think these are the apartments for you."

"You mean," said Robert, laughing good-naturedly, "that I am scarcely an occupant suited to your apartments. Don't put yourself in any fright about that, however. I am not an artisan by trade, only I like to do a little work with my hands now and then; but I have a profound respect for all the decencies of life; so pray don't reject my application on that account."

There was something so strange and unusual in this style of address from a young gentleman inspecting apartments with a view to making them his home, that the lady looked completely puzzled, and begged to withdraw for a moment "to consult"—she had begun to say, but corrected herself and said—"to consider the subject in connection with a friend who resided with her."

Robert willingly granted this permission, and the lady retired for a longer time than he had anticipated. Not being in the habit of spending much thought upon such matters as his lodgings, wherever they might be, he grew rather impatient

before the reappearance of the hostess ; and, unable to sit down, and keep himself quiet, he walked about the room, sometimes taking up some of the Indian curiosities with which the mantelpiece was plentifully covered, and sometimes twisting fringes, and pulling tassels, with no other purpose than to relieve himself in some degree of the annoyance of having so long to wait. Amongst other things which he did, he picked up a piece of paper from the floor. It was the same which the servant had brought to her mistress—a narrow strip now quite unfolded, on which was written in fair and beautiful characters, what he began to read without thinking for a moment about what he was doing. Even when he had recollected himself, he did not perceive anything particularly sacred in the narrow scroll ; and if there had been, the mischief was done, for the words were already read, being written in a peculiarly clear and legible hand. They were simply these : — “ Remember the piano ; and above all, find out his character and habits.”

“ The ‘ friend’s ’ writing, I suppose,” said Robert to himself ; “ and a very prudent and sagacious friend she seems to be. But I wonder who practises on the piano. The good lady, no doubt, has a young daughter, and the daughter takes music lessons—perhaps the friend is some decayed governess who teaches her. A charming feminine household ! I wish they would make haste, however. This will never do for me. I ought to have been at the office half-an-hour ago.”

Robert had looked at his watch, and was on the point of laying his hand on the bell, when the door opened, and the lady, looking a good deal reassured, again entered the room. She did not close the door after her ; and as Robert glanced past her towards the landing of the stairs, he saw a tall slender figure, dressed for going out, glide hastily down.

This was no decayed governess, for the step was so light, the figure seemed almost to fly. Ah ! Robert thought, he knew how it was—the people kept a kind of day school, and this was one of the pupils. No wonder the piano should be looked upon as an objection. Still he must be mistaken, for if the gliding figure was that of a pupil, why did she not come

in, instead of going out ? for it was still so early nobody could be leaving school at that hour. Well, he must leave the mystery of the gliding figure unsolved ; only if there really was a school kept in the house, he ought to know it.

Acting upon this conviction, Robert ventured to say in the tone of inquiry, “ Your friend, then, is musical ? ”

The lady replied in the affirmative, but rather shortly.

“ May I be so bold as to inquire whether you have many musical friends ? ”

“ We have scarcely any friends at all in this country.”

“ You compel me to ask another question, which I hope you will not consider impertinent. The *we* you mention—are they numerous ; in short, have you a large family or household ? ”

“ Only myself and one child.”

“ And your friend ? ”

“ I said we had scarcely any friends.”

“ In plain words then,—I don’t wish to be impertinent, but in plain words do you keep a school ? ”

“ Dreadful ! no, indeed, I assure you, nothing of the kind.”

“ And all that I shall hear of the piano is the practising of your own child ? ”

“ All will be the performance of my own child.”

“ Who has a governess sometimes, I suppose ? ”

“ Never.”

“ Very well, then ; I am satisfied, if you are.”

“ I have nothing to object to of any importance.”

“ And when can I enter upon my new home ? ”

“ Next week, if you please, or even earlier. Everything is ready, so far as I know ; but I can ascertain to-night when Mary comes home, and drop you a line if you will favour me with your address.”

“ Mary,” said Robert to himself ; “ this is a new character introduced into the plot. There is the friend, and the child, and this Mary ; and yet the family are only two. Well, that is of no consequence to me. There may be fifty of them for anything I care, so long as they do not keep a school, and all practise on the piano.”

While these thoughts were passing through Robert’s mind, he was writing his

address more fully on the back of his card ; which being done, he presented it to the lady, wished her good morning, and hastily left the room. On descending the stairs he passed an open door, through which a natural curiosity induced him to give one hasty glance. The dreaded piano was not there, but a scene of great comfort ; the room being fitted up with accommodations of various kinds, well suited to habits of greater repose, and even luxury, than appeared consistent with the position of a family reduced to the necessity of letting their apartments for hire.

Indeed, all the time that Robert was negotiating with the mistress of the house, he had felt himself in the presence of a gentlewoman ; and whatever absurdity might in the opinion of other men, perhaps in his, have attached to her occasional fits of grandeur and dignity, he felt far too much sympathy with any one who had fallen from happier circumstances, and knew the pressure of such humiliating necessity, voluntarily to indulge his sense of the ridiculous, even for a single moment, at the expense of feelings already perhaps too severely wounded by what it was impossible to avoid. Thus, the young gentleman, though pressing his inquiries about the school a little too closely, managed to leave behind him rather an agreeable impression ; while he, on his part, pursued his way without bestowing more thought upon the matter than amounted to a general feeling of satisfaction.

According to his wishes, expressed to Mrs. Maitland, the lady of the house,—it was announced to Robert that the apartments would be in perfect readiness on the Monday of the following week. The note which conveyed this intelligence, was written in that same beautiful hand which he had observed on the slip of paper ; but whether it was penned by the friend—the child—or Mary, was still a question of difficult solution.

Robert thought himself a great simpleton to be feeling the slightest curiosity about these people, with so many heavy cares as he had pressing on his mind ; and yet for this very reason, it was happy for him that he could find a momentary amusement in circumstances so trifling, and so entirely unconnected with the weightier business of his life.

At the appointed time, Robert arrived at his new lodgings, with an amount of luggage, if it might be called such, or rather of boxes, hampers, and packing-cases, enough to have startled a less nervous person than the widow, who very reasonably trembled for her first-floor drawing-room.

"I think, ma'am, the lodger will require a workshop more than a drawing-room," said a panting maid-servant, who had been assisting the porter and cabman up stairs with the heavy goods. "It's my belief that's machinery that we've been carrying up stairs, and I only hope it mayn't go off. There was something very much like a great gun ; weren't there, porter ?"

The porter nodded and winked ; but having discharged his duty, and received his reward, went quietly away without committing himself.

"I don't like this very much," said Mrs. Maitland, as she stood hesitating at the door of her own sitting-room, which opened into the hall. "I wish Mary was at home. There is, you know, Jane, the long attic nearly empty, we might let him stow some of his things away there."

"Oh, ma'am !" said Jane, "I don't think he wants them stowed. It's my belief he'll be always a-working of them. I should like to bargain for one thing, I know."

"What is that, Jane ?" asked the lady.

"It is," replied the servant, "that neither grease nor gunpowder shall come near my drawing-room stove."

"Grease and gunpowder !" repeated Mrs. Maitland, with an amount of horror which nearly choked her voice. "What can you mean, Jane ?"

"I mean," said the servant, "that my cousin once lived in a situation where the gentleman was always a making of sky-rockets"—

"Sky-rockets !" exclaimed the lady, "I never heard any thing so dreadful. I wish Mary was at home. What o'clock is it, Jane ?"

"The Trinity Church has only just struck ten," replied Jane. "It wants four good hours yet to Miss Maitland's coming back."

The widow sighed. Her circumstances were becoming too much for her. She retired into her own sitting-room, and sank down amongst her cushions. To

make the matter worse, there was the lodger on the first floor, immediately overhead, thumping, and lumbering, and dragging about his heavy packages, as if Vulcan himself had come, and was preparing to set up his furnace in that very room!

The widow lady suffered much as she sate, or rather reclined, on a sofa below. She even shed a few tears, for the necessity was a very hard one to bear which had brought things to this pass.

"I am sure I thought the young man had been a gentleman," she said, partially rousing herself, as Jane, the servant, entered the room, coming, however, on some very slender pretext, her real purpose being to relieve her mind of the burden of a new idea.

"Oh, ma'am," the girl began again, "I think I know all about it now. The gentleman's got a balloon, and he'll be risin' some day from our sky-light."

"Go away, Jane," said Mrs. Maitland, "you really distress me too much. Besides which, you make too free a great deal. I shall tell Miss Maitland how you have been conducting yourself."

In justice to poor Jane, it must be stated that she made no pretensions whatever to the polish of a London bring-up. She was as completely a country girl, as if she had never trod the streets of that city. She had been first engaged, as country girls often are, by a newly married couple spending their honeymoon in a retired and picturesque scene in one of the midland counties, who thought it a great gain to them to bring the clean, handy, little maid, from her father's cottage to wait upon them in their new house in the city. But the girl soon lost her bloom and health under this great change, caught a fever, and was sent to a hospital. This was, unquestionably, the kindest step which could have been taken; but a sudden alteration took place in the business on which the newly married pair were dependent. The husband was appointed to a different post, and they went to live elsewhere.

The father of Jane had been written to on the commencement of her illness, but he was a poor shepherd tending his flocks upon far distant hills, and could neither read nor write. Besides which, his daughter's address, with the name of the hospital,

had been forgotten in the hurry of leaving London. Jane herself knew nothing of these proceedings, so that, when dismissed from the hospital, on her recovery, though still extremely weak, and entirely penniless, she repaired to the house of her master and mistress, but found it closed against her, in other words, filled with other occupants, who knew nothing, not even the name, and still less the destination, of the family who had inhabited the house before.

Gentle reader, this is no exaggerated account of the circumstances of young country girls in London, as those who know anything of the internal history of its penitentiaries will bear the writer witness. She herself once found on the unfurnished floor of a deserted gin-palace, a dying girl who had reached that miserable end precisely in this manner, but so rapidly, that the fresh bloom of the country had scarcely left her cheeks, before consumption deepened it into a spot of burning crimson. This girl was released from her horrid den, and conveyed to her father's cottage in Kent, to spend what could only be a few days of her fast ebbing life. It was by no slight effort that this privilege was obtained for her—only by representing to the parish authorities at Clerkenwell that the expenses of her funeral would fall upon them, if she was not immediately removed.

But it is one of the great pleasures of an imaginary history, that champions can be raised up to defend the oppressed, and to shelter the neglected. Therefore we beg the reader will go back with us, and see how this poor child, for Jane was then very young, stood at the corner of a street, crying—what else could she do? Only think! a good-looking, innocent, country girl, delicate from recent illness, crying at the corner of one of the busy streets of that great city!

We will not think what the reality of such a case would most likely be. It pleases us far better to believe, that a slender, grave-looking young lady was just then passing, that her delicate, white hand was instantly stretched out to the nearest policeman, plucking him by the sleeve, and that her silvery voice said to him, "Do come this way, and take this poor young creature under your care"

The policeman turned round, as might have been expected, with the greatest possible indifference. He had seen hundreds of young girls crying at the corners of streets—half of them impostors—the other half—but no matter. He went mechanically, and began rather roughly to question the girl. In this instance it seemed as if he also had been struck with the reality of the distress he witnessed, for he listened to the relation of its cause with some degree of belief, as was manifest by his serious tone and earnest expression of countenance.

The young lady stood beside him all the while, looking alternately at the policeman and the girl. She, herself, implicitly believed every word of the story, but her purse was very low, and she was too young, she felt, to act the patroness in her own person.

"I think," said she, "I know a poor woman who would take this girl as a lodger for a few days, and I believe I could bear the expense."

"Better be on your guard," said the policeman, "as to what you do. It is not for young ladies to be meddling in these matters. These cases are always suspicious, and nine chances to one the girl is an impostor."

"But there is the *one* chance," said Miss Maitland, for it was Jane's present young mistress who thus pleaded for her.

At last the policeman said, "I'll tell you what we'll do, Miss. There's a house of refuge up yonder in John-street; she'll be perfectly safe there. And if so be that the girl proves to be an honest one, I'll let you know; for the difficulty is what to do with them when they are good girls, and nobody owns to them, as seems to be the case here. Come along a' me," said the policeman, drawing the girl's shawl around her, and leading her away very much like a culprit, though she was happily unconscious of the nods and winks which her appearance thus conducted, called forth on the part of the lowest class of spectators.

It is needless to go further into the details of this story, than to say that after exercising more strength of determination, and more courage and patience than is usual at her age, Miss Maitland succeeded in obtaining her mother's consent to the

young girl being received under their roof, where she was soon installed into office as servant of all work. A better servant it was universally acknowledged of her, never bore the burden of a whole house upon her shoulders; but Jane had notwithstanding, some strange ways of her own, and never could be brought to wear the polish which might have better recommended her to mistresses in general. She had a strange diction too, for she picked up a little from the baker, a little from the sweep, and a great deal from the washerwoman, as being the highest authority, and this she engrafted upon her mother tongue so as to be able to offer at this stage of her experience, about as odd a medley as ever poured itself forth in words from a fluent tongue. Jane liked to talk too, exceedingly; she liked wonder, and strange things, and was not inapt herself at making things a little more wonderful than there was any occasion for them to be. Thus the new lodger was to her a being of great mystery and astonishment, especially his luggage and appurtenances, in which she seemed to apprehend there might be concealed a world of explosive elements.

Mrs. Maitland, always nervous and apprehensive, was easily worked upon by the reality of the girl's apprehensions, though often at the same time perfectly conscious of their unreasonableness. Thus the last charge of Miss Maitland, on going out of the house, was generally this—"And mind, Jane,—be sure you don't flurry my mother. If you have any strange fears, keep them to yourself. If I find her ill when I return, I shall certainly blame you for making her so."

In the present instance, Jane had no shadow of doubt but that she should be blamed, and that rather severely, though she thought the strange gentleman ought in common justice to share the blame with her; for what with her own private feelings, which she often said were more than she knew how to bear; what with all the lifting, knocking, thumping, and tumbling; and what with all Jane's talk about sky-rockets and balloons, the lady of the house appeared to be in imminent danger of one of her worst "attacks," as they were called; so much so, that Jane, in an exceedingly repentant state of mind, went

about on tiptoe, and even hushed the canary by throwing a duster over its cage. She had a great mind to ask the young gentleman not to make so much noise upstairs. "But, dear me, there was no knowing what to do for the best." So Jane shed a tear or two in the kitchen, "all alone by herself," and wished from the bottom of her heart, she had never heard of such things as "sky-rockets and balloons."

In the midst of these melancholy reflections, Jane heard the outer door close. The gentleman had gone out. So far, so good, only nobody knew when he would come back, nor anything about dinner. This was all very bad. What would her young mistress say to such management?

Filled with wonder as well as with trouble of various kinds, Jane thought it safest to go upstairs, in the absence of the gentleman, and so ascertain for herself whether there was anything left behind in a particularly dangerous condition. Jane obeyed this impulse, entered the room, and to her astonishment saw that all things had been left almost as neatly adjusted, as if she had enjoyed the management of them herself. On the table lay a half-sheet of paper, on which was written in a large legible hand, such information as the new lodger thought the female members of the household might require.

"This was very thoughtful of him," Mrs. Maitland said, when Jane had taken the paper to her in a fit of astonishment, not being herself equal to the task of deciphering those, to her, mysterious-looking characters. "This looks well," Mrs. Maitland continued, "for so young a man. But it pleases me still better to know that to-day he does not return to dinner, for really there is no preparation for him, I believe—is there Jane?"

"Not in the least," replied Jane, her eyes opening wide at the thought of a new alarm.

"Well, don't look in that way," said her mistress. "You frighten me to death. It is all quite right,—at least it will be so at two o'clock, when Mary returns."

So Jane retreated without more words to the depths of her own department, where she worked away with double alacrity to make up for a little want of duty; for of all the terrors which at any time assailed

her, none could be so great as that of vexing her young mistress by causing annoyance or distress to her mother.

It was partly for his own convenience, that Robert had decided to trouble the family, no more than was necessary on this day. Indeed, for himself, he cared so little about dining, that he would at any time most willingly have eaten the simplest noonday meal in the city, so as to enjoy more leisure for his favourite pursuits in the after part of the day. On this occasion, he returned early, and pleased himself with the idea that, in a large and roomy apartment, he should find ample space for spreading about a collection of valuable architectural engravings which he was particularly fond of having always at hand.

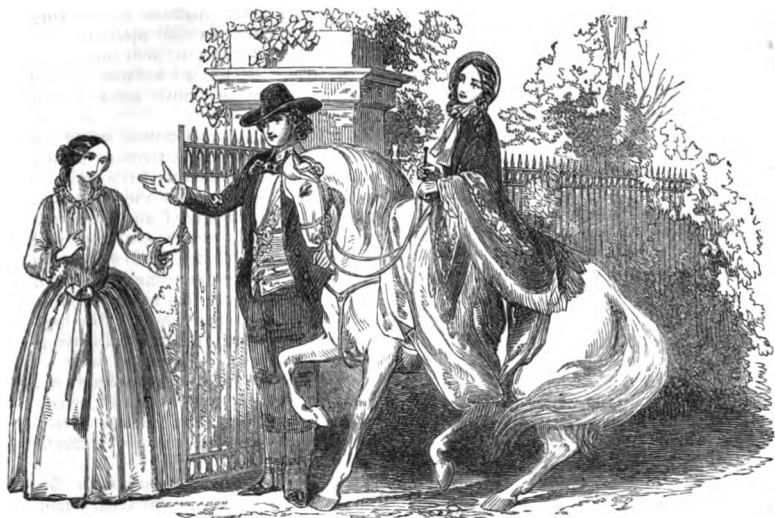
As Robert drew near the door of his new residence, he observed that a lady was approaching from the opposite direction, but he would scarcely have thought again on the subject had she not looked rather earnestly at him, and then quickened her pace as if to reach the door before him. The figure was that of a tall and slender girl. The features he scarcely saw, for they were half concealed by a veil.

Seeing the lady advance so hastily towards the steps of Mrs. Maitland's door, Robert very naturally waited for her to enter first. He expected she would knock, but instead of that, she applied a small key to the door. It seemed not to fit the latch, or else her hand trembled very much, for the key appeared to hop about the key-hole in a most extraordinary manner.

"I beg your pardon," said Robert, ascending the steps, "but if you would allow me to knock, I think we should gain time."

A very pleasant, but a very blushing face was immediately turned towards him. "Thank you, sir," said a voice equally pleasant. "I cannot imagine what has happened to my key."

Robert saw plainly what had happened. The hand which held the key was trembling and quivering so that to use it steadily for any purpose was impossible. He lifted the knocker, the door was opened, both entered, but the young lady immediately disappeared. It was Mary Maitland, the widow's child, but not the less her friend.



CHAPTER VI.

A lovely vision blessed his sight,
And woke strange feelings in his breast;
But short his season of delight,
Ere deeper gloom his soul oppress.

NOTWITHSTANDING the illness of Mr. Clifton—for it is not of a kind to present any painful or distressing symptoms,—there are great excitement and great joy apparent throughout his household just now. Everything wears the aspect of a great event being anticipated. Visitors have called frequently during the day—for the place where they now reside is full of unoccupied people, and there is, consequently, a great deal of dropping in everywhere. Visitors have called, and said they should not come again for two or three days, as if they thought the family might like to be left alone for awhile under the circumstances anticipated. It is not a marriage, for the two sisters appear quite unimportant; Robert is at his business, and Philip is away, but expected very soon. No one speaks much of this event either, and everybody talks about a marriage; so *that* great joy must be left out of calculation,—reserved for a future time.

Does it help the reader at all to guess what is coming, if we accompany the sisters on one of their frequent visits up to a little sleeping-room, freshly furnished with white dimity hangings—white indeed as driven snow; and where there is everything which comfortable habits can require, or comfortable notions suggest, to make the apartment most inviting to a weary traveller, who may have been accustomed for some time to the rough usages of distant lands or sea? On all these visits, though so frequent, the sisters find something to be done,—a fresh flower to be added to the nosegay on the dressing-table; a more easy chair to be introduced; some addition to be made to the already large collection of books; old family miniatures, including one of Aunt Ann, at the age of eighteen, to be readjusted on the wall; and if there were nothing else, there is a new Bible on the table, the birthday gift of “his affectionate sister, Catherine,” in which some of the various strings or marks have to be so placed as to make the volume open at some cheering passage, so that the heart of the beloved

brother may be comforted, while he feels that his personal wants are none of them neglected.

Yes; it is Seymour Clifton who is expected home—home from his first voyage. They know that he has landed safely at Portsmouth,—is now in London (for Robert has seen him),—and will be at home this very day, if all be well.

"It was very provoking of Robert," said Kitty, "not to tell us how he was looking; whether the sea air has spoiled his beauty, or his hands are tarry and rough."

"You silly child," said Helen; "do you think *he* has anything to do with tar?"

And thus the sisters chatted on throughout the day—not the most-wisely, perhaps,—for who is wise on the eve of a great happiness? Kitty, indeed, was absolutely absurd, Mrs. Clifton said, and such an intolerable fidget, there was no bearing her in the house with any degree of patience.

Amongst other visitors who called that day, were a brother and sister, with whom the Cliftons had lately become intimate. But they would not come in; they were only passing by the garden, and just called to inquire after Mr. Clifton's health. It was evident they did not wish to intrude at such a time.

The brother and sister now introduced were, like many other of the visitors, wanderers in search of health. Grace Linden, for that was the sister's name, was rather constitutionally delicate than affected by any particular malady. There was a malady, however, which had already swept off so many of her brothers and sisters, that every effort which her father and her friends could make on her behalf seemed directed to the one object of rescuing her from the fatal grasp of this disease. Perhaps if their object had been made less evident, the means employed might have been more certain of success; for there was something in the anxious watching of her father, his agonized start whenever she happened to cough, as well as in the solicitude with which he inspired his whole household, that made the delicate girl think often of her lost sisters and the cause of their early death, when her thoughts would have been more safely employed on other subjects.

Grace herself had an early and almost intuitive knowledge of all the symptoms

of this malady. She did not believe her own constitution in the slightest degree tainted with it yet; but she had more than once said to her brother, in their moments of confidence, "If any great shock ever falls upon me, I shall certainly go as my sisters did."

But her brother had assured her on these occasions, that no great shock ever should fall upon her. As to their father's health, that was the only quarter from whence calamity could be expected; but if she made up her mind to his death as necessarily occurring in the course of Nature, there was nothing, he positively assured her, that so long as his arm had strength, or his heart the pulse of life, should ever reach her in the way of injury, or even of sorrow. A liberal promise, truly, for a brother to make; but Henry Linden was as boundless in his affections as his promises, and, what is rather remarkable considering their extent, they were both sincere for the time being.

For their present amusement, Grace rides out every day on the most beautiful white pony ever extolled by a boastful owner, old Mr. Linden being almost as proud of his horses as his children. The pony in question is called Sylph, and when Grace Linden sits smiling upon it, with her rich shawl hanging loosely about her, its neck arching as if with the pride it feels in bearing so precious a burden, and its long, silky mane drooping nearly to the ground, there can scarcely be found a more beautiful picture for the eye either of the painter or the poet to rest upon. Nor does the brother form any inferior accompaniment to the scene. A little addicted to the affectation of a fanciful costume, and fully conscious how well it becomes his handsome face and graceful person, Henry Linden walks beside his sister, guiding her bridle-rein, sometimes looking like a Spanish cavalier; at others a troubadour; for Henry is musical, and often sings as he goes; while at others, when the grand or gloomy fit is upon him, he revels in all the accompaniments of a bandit chief.

Absurd as all these things are, Henry Linden has an idle way of tossing the absurdity off, and becoming a young man of sense so soon as it pleases him to be such; so that, upon the whole, he escapes

a good deal of ridicule, if not also of contempt, by laughing at his own absurdities and ridiculing himself.

In this style the brother and the sister were going out for their morning's excursion on the day of the great event to the Cliftons. They stopped, as already said, at the garden-gate in passing, and Kitty ran out to them; for, of all beings upon earth, next to her brother Seymour, she loved the delicate and gentle Grace.

"You look so well this morning," said Kitty, glancing up at the smiling face and heightened colour of her friend.

"And I?" said the brother.

"Oh, you!" exclaimed Kitty, who kept up a continual banter with the young gentleman, "you, as usual, are a perfect fright."

"Thank you," Henry replied, not in the slightest degree moved from his pedestal of self-esteem. "You will admire me more to-morrow, for I have something charmingly new coming out from Madrid, I can tell you."

"I shall admire you if you like my brother Seymour," replied Kitty; "if you like him only half—only one hundredth part as well as he deserves to be liked."

In this manner the innocent girl, out of the warmth of her heart, had been accustomed to run on about her favourite brother whenever she spoke of him to her friends—a method of introducing him to their notice not quite so judicious as it was natural.

"I will tell you a little secret this morning," said Henry, glancing at his sister's blushing face.

"No, no," exclaimed Grace, "I will tell it myself. It will be quite a different thing if Catherine hears it from you."

But Henry would not be quieted, and, with all her remonstrances, Grace had the worst of it, because her brother held her pony off at arm's length, while he drew Kitty to his side, in order that she might hear all he had to say without interruption.

"What do you think?" he began; "that good sister of mine says she believes she shall like your brother Philip best, because you never speak his praises."

There was a good deal of exclamation about this on the part of both the friends, —a good deal of laughter and some

blushes; after which, the travellers turned to pursue their way; but Kitty stood still at the garden gate, not exactly to look after them, but to ponder in her young heart what this could mean.

"Well, they will both be here soon," she said, at last turning towards the house, and not quite so happy as when she left it, though wholly unconscious of any reason for feeling otherwise.

The young sailor arrived precisely at the expected time, and great, indeed, and warm and joyous, were the congratulations which threatened to overwhelm him. No one could tell for a long time whether he was altered or not, for the sisters could not be made to retreat so far as for a general view to be obtained of his countenance; it would have been unreasonable to expect any, even of a midshipman, under such circumstances, covered with kisses as it was; so that Mrs. Clifton complained she could not really tell whether the face was that of her own boy or not.

At last the well-known features were exposed to view,—the form and figure too. Most certainly the youth was altered; but all for the better, every one said; only Kitty whispered *that* could not be. Certainly the youth was altered—bronzed, darkened, and in all respects converted into a more manly looking person. His once slender shoulders had now gained sufficient breadth; his once golden hair had darkened to a rich chestnut brown; his eyes, still softly blue, were deepened in their expression, by eyebrows even darker than his hair, but yet almost too delicately pencilled for those of a man.

"But what is this?" said Mrs. Clifton, lifting up a light, for it was late in the evening when the young man arrived; "What is this?" she asked again, at the same time laying her hand on that part of Seymour's forehead where a scar was visible. It pained the mother's heart to see this scar, and, drawing her hand gently over it, she only whispered the next time she asked "What is this, my boy?"

The answer was in a whisper too,— "Don't ask me now," and something like a frown flitted over the beautiful countenance; but it was gone in a moment, and nothing but smiles of gladness and affection remained.

It might have been observed, on the

following morning, by any one who thought on the subject, that Seymour had carefully adjusted his hair in such a manner as to hide that part of his forehead which had excited this inquiry; but all were too happy to think of blemishes, disasters, or distresses of any kind; and it would have been a distress to the youth to have pushed the inquiry which his mother began; for there had been so much of terror and of agony of mind connected with the accident which occasioned that scar, so much weakness on his part, and jesting on the part of his companions in the ship when it occurred, that a single allusion to the subject was enough, at any time, to call up a host of miserable and humiliating recollections, linked together in such a manner that no single one ever came without being accompanied by all—even down to the sufferings of childhood, and the frequent exclamations of his brother that "Seymour was a coward."

But, as already said, all these thoughts were put away. Nobody contemplated the beloved wanderer just returned to his family as any other than beautiful, and brave, and noble. He was so to them, and he might have been so to others, had his lot in life been cast amongst circumstances more congenial to his nature.

Perhaps no happier little being could have been found on the face of the earth than was Seymour's youngest sister on this day, and on many after days. She had the womanly tact, however, not to be obtrusive with her happiness; not to be too fondling either; but rather kept a little way aloof from her brother, allowing others the nearest place; and then she looked after his clothes, his linen, and a thousand things connected with his comfort; returning, however, pretty frequently, as the possessor of some newly found treasure returns, to see that all is safe, as well as to regale his vision with the spectacle of so much wealth.

Then there was so much to tell. It seemed, indeed, as if life on land had been much more productive of interest than life at sea; for the brother told but little, and that only when asked about what he had suffered or admired; so that poor Mr. Clifton, always listless and weary of his present uneventful life, was grievously

disappointed in the calculations he had made about the endless amusement it would afford him to have a son coming home from sea; telling of the customs and the commerce of other lands; and proving, what in his mind, however, required no proof, that England was, after all, incomparably the best country in the world.

Sometimes, when quite alone with his youngest sister, Seymour did speak a little of his past life; but it was always of feelings rather than facts, of mighty horrors, of perils, and of trials unspeakable, which it seemed to have been his constant struggle so to bear as not absolutely to disgrace himself. So much Kitty did manage to ascertain; and she discovered, too, with no inconsiderable amount of anxiety, that in relation to his mode of life her brother's private feelings were as adverse as ever.

Indeed, Seymour said to her one day, and he shuddered as he spoke, "I believe, Kitty, it will some time or other be found that I am missing from the ship; hiding in the bush on some desolate island, or drowned in the surf. I sometimes don't care very much about how it is, if only I could escape."

The first time Seymour spoke to his sister in this manner was about three days after his arrival at home. They were strolling together over a pretty common, their feet treading softly amongst the short grass and scented thyme. The birds were singing gaily in the bushes around them, a few sheep were scattered here and there, and a few children played near the cottages, which gleamed white amongst their own little orchards and bowery gardens.

"What a blessed thing it is," exclaimed Seymour, "to stand and feel oneself upon this solid earth—upon God's earth!"

"But the sea must be very fine sometimes; and you know, Seymour, as we once said before, it is God's sea, too."

Seymour shuddered. "Sit down with me, Kitty, upon this mossy bank. I want something firm to rest upon. You cannot think how beautiful all this is to me!" And he waved his hand, and raised both arms, as if he would actually have embraced the whole surrounding scene.

"Oh! Kitty, I was made to enjoy this kind of life! Why, look you, I would just

now change places with that poor lame man whose daughter has brought him out into the sunshine to sit and hear the birds sing."

"Would you, Seymy?"

"Yes, indeed I would."

"And yet, very likely, if we could look into that man's heart, and feel the pain of his leg,—and it is very painful, Seymour, for I know him well; Helen and I often go into his cottage,—very likely, if we could be in his place, and feel all that he feels, we should be saying—Oh that I was that fine young gentleman, with all his health, and spirits, and glorious prospects! born to honour and distinction; and dying, if he does die, in his country's cause, with the tears of a whole nation falling for him."

"Do you think it is so, Kitty?"

"I do, for I know the man well; and I know he considers it the greatest glory, and the greatest privilege, to serve in the army or the navy. He himself, poor man, began life as a soldier, only the accident which deprived him of the use of his limb of course altered his lot altogether."

"And what is he now?"

"Not much of anything, I am afraid. He makes baskets sometimes; but he is a sort of hanger-on upon the charity of chance visitors—a miserable life enough, for it makes him cringing, and false, and discontented. If he had been a sailor, he might, at least, have been manly and brave."

"Kitty, do you think all sailors are manly and brave?"

"Oh! yes. I have no doubt of it. They must be, or how could they live?"

"How could they live, indeed!"

As the brother and sister chatted thus together, they sat still upon the verdant bank, where, though screened from observation themselves by a thick hawthorn bush, they could see for a considerable distance the winding road which led almost immediately past them. Looking carelessly along this road, with his thoughts far distant, Seymour exclaimed suddenly—"What is that in the distance, Kitty? Have you gipsies in this neighbourhood?"

"Yes, a great many," replied Kitty, shading her eyes from the sun, and looking the same way; "but those are not gipsies."

"How can you tell at this distance?" asked her brother.

"Oh! I know quite well who they are," replied Kitty; and a new joy began to glisten in her eyes.

"Who are they?" asked Seymour, somewhat impatiently; for he marked the heightened colour on his sister's cheek, and the general animation of her countenance.

"Did I not tell you," said Kitty, "that we had some very nice friends here?"

"You said something about friends," replied her brother; "but I don't recollect that they were *nice*."

"You shall see for yourself whether they are or not; for it is Grace herself, I am sure it is." And with this the girl started up from her seat, and seemed on the point of running off to meet her friend.

"Stop, stop!" exclaimed Seymour, holding her back by the corner of her shawl, "you have spoken of Grace, and no doubt that female figure is very graceful indeed. But tell me, I beg of you, what is that monster moving by her side?"

"Monster!" said Kitty, with a slight tone of indignation in her voice; "monster!" she repeated, "Why that is her brother, Henry Linden, a very elegant young man indeed!"

"Elegant!" Seymour had scarcely time to subdue the sneer with which this word was uttered, when the white pony was turned off the public road by the guiding hand which held its rein. The two travellers had recognised the figure of Catherine Clifton when she stood upon the bank; and not being aware that a stranger was with her, they very naturally drew towards the spot for the purpose of making their accustomed friendly inquiries.

But Seymour now started to his feet. It was too late for them to turn away. The young people stood face to face, and a proper introduction, which devolved upon the delighted Catherine to make, was the necessary consequence.

Although this interview was remarkable for little beyond the common place, in which such interviews are most fruitful, it led to a better acquaintance, in the space of time afforded, than is generally the case. In fact, both parties were prepared, one before-hand, and the other on

the instant, for making the most of the opportunity. The Lindens had heard so much of Seymour Clifton that they, on their part, were no strangers, though they had scarcely expected to see so fine and handsome a young man; and the agreeable surprise which lighted up the countenance of Grace, as she glanced from behind his sister, was not lost upon Kitty's affectionate heart. On the other hand, sailors are remarkable for offering a ready, if not a very lasting or profound kind of homage to the first attractive object in female form which catches their admiring glance on returning home after a long voyage. Seymour Clifton was no exception to this rule. He had been a good deal struck with two or three beautiful objects of this kind already. For his sake we will not tell whether they were absolute ladies or not. But now—now, when not only a lady in the best sense of the word, but a being lovely in every sense, was smiling before him, with all the cordial familiarity of his sister's friend,—no wonder that a youth, naturally enthusiastic in his admiration of beauty, should be captivated almost to enchantment with the vision he beheld. Many other youths would have been the same; for Grace Linden on her white pony was universally acknowledged to be the prettiest picture by which that neighbourhood was adorned; and on this occasion she had been riding faster than usual, so that her hair floated loosely about her neck and face; her bonnet, after many vain efforts to make it keep its place, had fallen back; and the excitement of the exercise, and a good deal of laughter by the way, had brought a glow into her cheeks which, it must be confessed, they too often wanted.

"Is she not a beautiful creature?" whispered Kitty to her brother, as they walked after the Lindens, for by general consent the party had become one, and pursued the same way,—"Is she not a beautiful creature, Seymour?"

"Don't call me Seymour now," replied he, rather sharply.

Kitty looked aside into his face. He was not angry. That was enough for her; but she scarcely ever called him by that pet name again.

"And the brother?" said Kitty; "what do you think of him?"

"That he is a great puppy," replied Seymour.

Kitty laughed a little; it was only a little, though; for somehow or other she did not like other people to take exactly the kind of liberties with Henry Linden which she was in the habit of taking herself. She knew that he was absurd; no one knew that better; but she knew also that he was kind, and so devoted to his sister, that his affection for her almost partook of the character of chivalry and romance; for never did errant knight perform more feats of gallantry than he was always prepared to perform on his sister's behalf. It is true they did not live so much together as to wear out this enthusiasm by its constant application to ordinary purposes; for Henry was professedly studying the law, so that on every return to his family, it was easy to take up the same fervour again; and nothing could be more congenial to a youth of such picturesque tastes than to lead about so lovely and attractive a picture as his sister on her pony, through a beautiful country, in glorious weather, and with all the additional enjoyment of cheerful and pleasant companionship.

For the credit of Henry Linden's gallantry, it was well that this kind of easy enjoyment could only be continued for a short time at once. In a few weeks he was back to his dull dry studies again; his place beside the pony was taken by a faithful domestic; and Grace went out less frequently, took shorter rides, and looked less animated and less happy when she returned.

The commencement of the acquaintance, already described, appeared very promising to the faithful Kitty, only that her brother had called Henry Linden a "monster," and a "puppy," neither of which epithets she thought were called for on the present occasion; for the young man gave place to Seymour beside his sister's pony, and respectfully fell back, and talked with Kitty all the rest of the way.

In this manner the little party went loitering on—perhaps some of them would not have cared if their path had been lengthened instead of shortened by every step. In this manner they went loitering on, and chatting by the way; when, on reaching the first group of cottages which skirted the border of the town, they were

all somewhat startled by the sound of a carriage approaching them at an unusually rapid speed.

"Keep out of the way, Sylph," cried Henry Linden, rushing to the head of the pony, and leading it a little off the road, down a green slope at the side. "This must be some madman," he continued, "escaping from Bedlam; for who in their senses would think of driving in this manner along a public road?"

From a very natural curiosity to see what was coming, the party stood still while the carriage approached. It was a post-chaise proceeding at full gallop: they could not catch a glimpse of more than one head inside, and that was leaning back with the appearance of deriving great enjoyment from a cigar.

"It is Philip!" exclaimed Catherine Clifton, "Philip, himself, I do believe."

Whatever doubts might have been entertained on this subject were soon dispelled; for a large bushy head was thrust out of the window, and a shouting ensued which in time brought the wondering driver to obey his orders, and stop. But to stop was not all. He must turn his horses round, and drive back again to the place where the party were standing. Here Philip was in another instant springing from the step, his hat left behind, his wild hair all in confusion, and the flush either of excessive joy, or it might be of recent revel, bright upon his cheek.

Philip Clifton was a large—his brothers called him a *magnificent*,—representation of what is generally understood by a fine looking fellow. His figure was perfect, but rather Herculean; his complexion rich and glowing; his hair massive and thick, but so shining, that its thousand wavy curls could never be displaced so as to look anything but beautiful. His eyes were large, full, and of a greyish brown. He might have sat to a sculptor or a painter equally well. But he was yet very young. The delicacy of boyhood was still evident about his throat and the full rounded contour of his mouth and chin. Time had yet to prove what all this fulness and roundness of contour would become, when the habits of life should have marked them more distinctly with the characteristics of the man. Ah! well may the heart of many a mother ache

for her beautiful boy, and mourn, in after years, that the impress of manhood should have disfigured the fair countenance of youth. But, where it is so, time alone is not to blame. There has been somewhere a great mistake, for a well-spent manhood is also beautiful. The mistake lies, unquestionably, in that on which the man bestows his strength, his time, his talents—all the vigour of his heart and life. But may it not also be, to some extent, chargeable upon the poor mother?—upon her who is the most melancholy watcher of that sad shipwreck by which so many proud hopes and high anticipations are lost for ever?

In relation to Philip Clifton, however, there is no shipwreck to be anticipated yet—anything but that. He looks, indeed, as if he could carry away half the world upon his own shoulders, instead of the world carrying him away—a very Samson, only with the full possession of his sight, and as yet, without the touch of harm upon a single hair of that magnificent head.

In this style, and with this look about him, Philip had sprung from the carriage, and had already gone half through his pleasant, easy, good-humoured salutations to his sister Kitty and her friends, when he perceived that his brother Seymour made one of the party. "What! Seymy," he exclaimed, "the Admiral here, too! Why, I'm sure they would not know you at the conventicle yonder, in the country. Do you think Polly, the milk-maid, would shake hands with you now?"

"Hush! hush!" said Kitty, pressing her brother's arm till he flinched. "For goodness sake, Philip, do be quiet, now."

"Oh! yes," said Philip, "I feel very likely to be quiet," and he laughed so heartily, that some people would have thought he had taken too much wine. Kitty, however, had no such suspicion of her brother; but still there was something about him which made her not unwilling to get him away from her friends; and with that feeling she accepted his proposal to accompany him the remainder of the way in the chaise; only stipulating that he would drive more respectfully into the town. This member of the Clifton family was destined for the Church.

The Lindens were too well bred to

make any remark to Seymour upon the appearance or manners of his brother. Perhaps they had no remark to make. Grace, at all events, was more startled than displeased, for she thought him the finest-looking young man she had ever seen in her life, and eminently good-natured; but, as already stated, she said nothing about what she thought. Seymour was very silent too, so that the tumultuous vision which had so suddenly burst upon them seemed to have interrupted the train of their words and thoughts, without leaving anything behind which it was possible to converse about.

The way was not long, however, before the party had to separate, each for their own homes. Seymour was in no haste to take his silent path alone, but rather went round with Miss Linden and her brother, still walking close to the pony, until the lady herself inquired if he did not wish to join the congratulations at home? At this inquiry Seymour started. He thought it was a hint that his company was not wished for; and bidding the brother and sister good-bye with some formality, he turned away.

It would have seemed strange to them had they known that Seymour did not go immediately home, but, turning into a shady lane, stole quietly along beneath a row of stately trees whose shadows now swept far upon the grass. By these trees he was screened from the observation of any one passing along the lane. He had found them out before, for he was much addicted to solitary rambles, and trees were so beautiful to him now, that he seemed almost to converse with them like old friends, long lost but found again. Seymour himself could not tell what had come over him. He seemed to have lived a whole year in the last half-hour. Was it a year of happiness? Most assuredly he was not happy then. He felt rather like one who had been permitted to enjoy a glimpse of heaven—to look in at the golden gates, but not to enter—to be thrust back, as it were, by the arm of a strong giant. Was it so, indeed? Was anything as it seemed to be—anything real? Was this the land which he stood upon—the long wished-for land towards which his heart had yearned

in the great solitudes of the ocean, as towards a mother? Surely, then, there was misery on land as well as sea. "But," exclaimed Seymour, "there is the same great God over all!" And he clasped his hands together, and looked upwards towards the western sky, where the hues, already bright and golden, were beginning to gleam with double brilliance through the thick foliage of the trees. "There is the same great God over all, blessed forever—and it is he alone who can still this tumult, resolve these doubts, and make bearable the burden of this existence."

Already strange feelings were at work in Seymour's heart—feelings which he might have vainly endeavoured to explain to another, and which he tried as vainly to understand himself. Sometimes these feelings assumed the character of holy heavenward aspirations—sometimes they seemed to plunge him back, and place him appropriately in dens of wretchedness, amidst lost spirits and howling fiends. His brothers would have thought him mad had he told them what he felt—his sisters would have pitied him too much. He wanted some listener to his sorrows who was not a sister, and not a man. He had been told that Grace Linden was a very religious young lady; much addicted to the reading of holy books, and a zealous supporter of the religious institutions of her country. Ah! if *she* would listen to him?

But why had Philip burst in upon them just now? There would be no serious conversation where Philip was. His presence would spoil all. And then he was sure to call him all sorts of foolish names, and tell old stories of their boyhood, making everybody despise him.

Seymour was shocked at the feelings which now crowded upon his heart. This was not joy at the family meeting so long anticipated. Again he clasped his hands together; again he looked inward and upward; but not yet high enough to find for his troubled spirit rest or peace. He could not understand his own sensations; they seemed so out of harmony with everything around him. So he walked backwards and forwards beneath the old trees until the dews began to fall; and then he turned quietly home, and tried to be as happy as the rest of his family.



CHAPTER VII.

They walked together 'neath the trees,
And softly to each other spoke,
Each heart a lyre, whose strings were woke
By touch of sweetest sympathies.

"SEMY, my boy," said Philip Clifton to his brother on the following day, "have you learned to swear?"

"No, certainly not," replied Seymour.

"I am afraid I have," continued Philip.

"The more's the pity," said Seymour; "you surely cannot reckon that amongst the attainments necessary to fit you for the church. I call it an attainment, because you know, Philip, we were not brought up to the habit, as many are; and it has often struck me, that to those who practice the habit without having been brought up to it from childhood, there must have been a time when they have absolutely *tried* to swear."

"It is an accomplishment certainly, an accomplishment peculiar to civilized life."

"In this, as well as in many other practices of social and even of polished life, the example of heathens and barbarians might put us to shame. They

mistake their God, and imagine for him attributes which are anything but divine; we believe in the divinity of ours, and yet mock and blaspheme his name."

"Come, Semy, I call that too good for an admiral; you must really give me a leaf out of your book some of these days."

"Seriously, how do you get on, Philip, in your *profession*? for I will not give it any other name."

"Why, badly, Semy, very badly. I've some awkward looking sums owing yonder, and I want a very grave amount of cash this time."

"And yet you came dashing home in your chaise, instead of waiting an hour or two to come by a public conveyance."

"Why, look you, Semy, I had been at—but no matter. Only I don't think I was quite myself, if the truth must be told."

"Not at that time of day, Philip? you astonish me."

"I could astonish you a little more, I dare say, if I were to go on making a clear breast, as they say; and perhaps

I may do so some day, but not now. My hour of confession has not come yet. Seymy, I think I shall send for you when I'm dying; will you come to me?"

"Anywhere Philip,—anywhere in the wide world."

"I think I'm growing rather queer, Seymy, about this church affair. I've a good mind to start off somewhere to one of these new colonies, and begin a new life. What do you think?"

"I think you may easily begin a new life even here; if you wish it; you are so young yet; and of this I am sure, that if you are in earnest, God will help you to do what is right."

"You get on so fast, Seymy; I had no thoughts of that kind, I can assure you. Only I am a little sick of what I see and hear sometimes; sick of myself, mind you, more than anything else; and it seems to me, that it would be more honest and more manly to head a gang of robbers, to thief, stab, murder, do anything, in short, that is desperate and bold, than to sneak into a pulpit and preach, with no more love of holiness than I find in my heart, or practice in my life."

"And yet you do love holiness, Philip?"

"I'll tell you where I love it, Seymour—I love a holy woman."

"And yet when you think seriously, Philip, you must see that society could not be kept together on such terms: that holiness could not possibly exist in one sex, and rank vice in the other. The very nature of vice is to corrupt and pollute; besides which, what real heart intercourse can there be betwixt a man of vicious habits and a holy woman?"

"That is the very question I have been asking myself this morning; a very grave one for me, is it not, Seymy?"

"Very; but why this morning particularly?"

"It is quite possible I shall decline answering that question, Seymy."

"Do as you please. I only asked you out of pure interest, for I am sure, Philip, there is something about you too good to be thrown away."

"Shall I tell you how it is, Seymour?"

"Pray do."

"Well, then, in my heart I hate the kind of life I am leading. You don't know what it is, but I do; and sometimes

I hate the sort of fellows I am thrown amongst; for you must understand I am mixed up with a set, whose ways of going on would frighten your poor little soul out of your body; and yet, Seymy, I can't tell you how it is. So there's an end of the matter. Which way do the Lindens usually take when they go out?"

"I am sure I cannot tell you. Why do you ask?"

"Nay, don't look so fierce about it, Seymy; surely I've a right to go whichever way I like. You know I'm a student working hard at other times, and so needing relaxation, and long country rambles. I don't ask you to go with me."

"But——"

"Throw as many buts as you like in my way, Seymour, I can overleap them all when the temptation is strong enough. Grace—Grace Linden, is that the name?"

"And Henry, if you wish to know more."

"Oh, you mean that coxcomb of a brother. I intend to get rid of him by some stroke of enchantment."

As Philip Clifton rattled on in this manner, Seymour, who stood at a little distance,—for both had stopped in their idle loitering walk under the shadow of Seymour's favourite trees,—Seymour looked earnestly at his brother, who had thrown himself carelessly down upon the knotted roots of an oak, and he thought, as he gazed, that a more exquisite specimen of manly beauty—of that beauty which consists in symmetry of form, brightness of complexion, and general attractiveness—scarcely could be found in all the wide range of human life. How was it with the soul enshrined within this finely proportioned form? was that equally perfect, symmetrical, noble? There was one, he thought, who could make and keep it so; and he prayed silently for his brother, that he might become the glorious being for which, on a slight and general view, it seemed that nature had so admirably fitted him.

But Seymour reasoned, or rather mused about his brother, without much philosophy in his meditations. The dream which the mother had before the birth of this child had more real truth in it; for in that it was shadowed forth that the material would require attention—that the

physical, being unusually vigorous and strong, there would be a necessity for active enterprise, even the battle of strength against strength. Thus the vision had been one of daring exploits, of fierce encounters, of struggles with the warring elements of nature, opposing, overcoming, subduing, gaining mastery by animal force. These were the distinctive characteristics which the vision revealed; and yet this boy was selected from the family as one who was to be devoted to the church. Let him have plenty to do, rough work, and violent; let him have physical danger to encounter, and physical difficulty to overcome; let him have the elements for his foes, the winds, the waves, the great convulsions of nature, the terrors of lightning and thunder, the vastness of the desert, the monsters of the deep, or the wild beasts of the wilderness; in subduing these he may learn to subdue himself; but in study, in quiet, in the vacant unoccupancy of all his great energies, there is urgent cause to fear that enemies more terrible, and monsters far more hideous, than ever roamed the desert wastes of nature, will finally subdue him.

It looks like it even now, for Philip Clifton has begun a course of life at college which it is quite unnecessary to describe in these pages. His countenance is still, in its boyish beauty, fine, handsome, and almost untainted by any of the stains of vice; his heart is still naturally good, for he has a kind of cordial glowing love for what is honourable, just, and true. But what is to be done? All the most powerful part of his nature seems to lie waste, unoccupied, unused in the life he is now leading, except for such occasional outbreaks as inevitably lead to folly, if not to vice.

What is such a youth to do? Ah! there is a blessed religion that might help him here—help him to do battle with those worst of enemies, his own selfish passions; yes, and enable him to control them too. Blessed be that holy influence! there is no waste of any good gift, no want of exercise for any talent, faculty, or natural power, where that is once received into the heart, and made the master motive of all action, the vital principle of all life. But besides this, or rather belonging to, and in conformity with this influence, are

there not helps?—helps from philosophy—from man's knowledge of the wants of his own nature, and of its sufferings too? Are there not helps which the parent may lay hold of? Yes; and many do lay hold of such, blessing and praising God for having found them. Many more are seeking earnestly, and some with tears, fearing lest with them it should become too late. Thus the humblest suggestion of experience, the simplest hint of discovery from those who have had experience, and watched the growth of youth to age, may possibly fall upon the heart of some young mother, finding a ready entrance and a warm welcome there.

We have said that the first introduction of Philip Clifton to his sister's friends was not particularly calculated to produce an impression in his favour. But a candid youth is always ready to retrieve, so far as he can, any error of this kind, when sensible that he has gone too far, or acted inconsistently with right feeling and good taste. Philip was consequently sorry, on the following morning, to think what a vulgar blustering fellow he must have appeared in the sight of that delicate and beautiful creature, whose image had haunted him, in his dreams, under the representation of a form even fairer, if that could be, than Grace Linden herself. He had now to efface this impression, or where should he stand in the opinion of one who looked all purity and gentleness, yet dignified, and it might be, severe. Yes, he must do something, and the sooner the better, to erase the rude character he had written upon this unsullied mind. He would see her again, but it must not be obtrusively; and for this purpose Philip employed his early musing hours in making what inquiries he could, without giving any of his own family an idea of the mortification he was really feeling, or the importance he was already beginning to attach to the good opinion of Grace Linden; for, like many other youths of his age, there was nothing in the world which Philip less liked to bring upon himself than condolence under his own penitence; unless, indeed, it was, triumph over his own disgrace.

So Philip Clifton sought the information he wanted from other sources than his own family. For this purpose he took

an early stroll, looked in at the door of some adjacent cottages, called with some trifling errand at a neighbouring shop, and at last fell in with a laundress who happened to be employed by the Lindens, and who was making a purchase at the same shop.

Philip Clifton had a frank and easy way of eliciting information from any one, and particularly from those who considered themselves his inferiors. They were the more delighted from that reason with his pleasant, cordial, and often playful manner. His fine open countenance, too, with its bright colour, and glowing look, had an irresistible charm for them; and the tricks he sometimes played, and the nonsense he *could* talk, when he liked, were all the more enchanting because he never laid aside altogether the air and manner of a gentleman. Thus, on the present occasion, the handsome youth found very little difficulty in drawing out the laundress into a rather confidential chat about the Lindens; for Grace was so universally admired, that the woman felt no small degree of pride in being even the getter-up of her frills and collars. From this incontestible authority, then, Philip soon learned that Mr. Linden, the old gentleman, was very rich — “*immensely* rich,” the woman said; “though, on account of the dear young lady’s health, they didn’t make no show, nor keep much company, nor live in anything like the style they might do.”

And so the woman went on revealing, quite unconsciously, one or two facts in which Philip was deeply interested. One of these was that Miss Linden was “a very religious young lady,” the woman said, “not religious like those low people at the Octagon.” Philip did not know where nor what the Octagon was — “but, staunch to her church,” the woman said, and bent upon marrying a clergyman — that she heard from the lady’s own maid, who knew it for a fact: it was of no use any gentleman offering to Miss Linden if he was not a clergyman — no, not if he was the first lord in the land.

“Come, this will do very well,” said Philip Clifton to himself; and, rather suddenly cutting short the colloquy, after this agreeable piece of information — “this will do admirably!”

It was after he had received this intelligence, and with the agreeable impression it had made still fresh upon his mind, that Philip joined his brother Seymour. The accustomed current of his thoughts had then received a check; he was more than half disposed to give himself really to his duties, at least he fancied that he was. It was extremely easy, and very natural, to indulge this fancy while wandering in green lanes with pleasant companions, and with such a prospect as his imagination now conjured up before him. Would it be equally easy on returning to his former associates?

Philip was not so far gone yet, however, but that he had certain qualms of conscience, and the very sight of his brother Seymour gave them double force. Hence his wild and incoherent talk; for if, on the one hand, he was more tempted to pursue his studies for the church — on the other he felt, perhaps, more than ever before, his own unfitness for the office.

The young man was fortunate that day in meeting with the brother and sister, and he so managed to fall in with them as to avoid all appearance of doing so by design. He was fortunate, too, in being permitted to take charge of the white pony, with its rider, while Henry Linden chatted with a friend whom he met by the way; but he was more fortunate still in attracting the admiring gaze of the lovely being whose heart was so prepared to think kindly of every one, and especially of a young man studying for the church, that she felt no shrinking from him, no fear, and no suspicion, in consequence of the strangeness of his first introduction.

Philip was now himself, his better self in all respects, and he felt no wish to be otherwise. A sudden and strange gentleness seemed to be diffused over his whole nature. He could almost have wept, only that he was too happy to weep. He had a great mind, he said to himself, to begin a new life altogether. He wondered whether the delicate and beautiful being beside him knew much of the world, or had any idea what were the habits of young men like himself. He should think not. He would take good care that she never should know from him. He would school himself so far, at all events, if he did not altogether reform and become a saint. Not that he

was naturally addicted to deception, or had any turn for making himself appear better than he really was. But he scarcely called this deception, for he really felt so different already, so subdued and quiet, as he walked beside the white pony, that he began almost to think some great and radical change was being wrought upon him; and he involuntarily said within himself, "Perhaps I shall turn out as good as Seymy after all."

As these thoughts passed rapidly through the mind of the handsome youth, who, nevertheless, marched proudly on as if conducting an army, rather than a delicate and gentle girl; while these confused and vague ideas, for they could scarcely be called thoughts, flitted through his mind, each perhaps in itself rather an emotion than an idea, a sweet soft voice spoke ever and anon about the scenery, the place, the society, and all sorts of common-place and familiar things, yet speaking, as it did, in such silvery and musical tones, it seemed to invest each subject with an interest never felt before by him who listened with intense and undivided attention, yet scarcely knowing what he heard.

And so the excursion of that morning was carried on, and ended, as if in a dream. Oh, these *beginnings* of attachments when two young hearts, unquestioning, resign themselves entirely to the pleasure, and neither of them ask what is to be the pain, nor from whence it is to come! Ah! these *beginnings*, as it seems at the time, of a new life, in which all the evil, and all the sorrow of the past is to be left behind—in which nothing seems easier at the moment, nor more natural than that the whole nature should be changed, remodelled, and moulded again into a new form, in which all the characteristic features will be divine.

There is such sincerity, too, in these beginnings, such boundless and unquestioning belief—such blending of the eternal with the finite—such lifting of the soul out of the dust of every-day existence, and giving it the wings of an angel to hover over its beloved—such assumption of the holy offices of preservation, healing, comfort—such imaginary pillowing on the faithful breast, that neither ache nor pain, nor malady of mind or body shall ever more be felt. Such is the *beginning*; but

the end? Yes, the end. There are cases, not too numerous, in which the end is worthy of the beginning—a beautiful old age; and where it is so, how beautiful, no language can describe!—an old age in which the spirit is still sustained, and borne aloft by the wings of the same love, so that all the trials and vicissitudes of a long life have passed, comparatively heedless by, leaving the twain who have loved each other thus, like two venerable trees of the forest, more lovely in their autumnal foliage than even in the verdant hues of their early spring.

But will the beginning of which we speak ever reach this glorious end? Has it within itself those imperishable elements which are necessary to such a conclusion? Perhaps there might have been such an attachment commenced even under the same circumstances, only by the simple exchange of a Hercules for an Apollo. It seems that mistakes are made by others as well as the poor mothers, and very serious mistakes too. For instance, had that gentle girl preferred to have a figure not quite so tall or so robust perpetually sauntering with her over the downs, or through the shady lanes; had she liked as well or better to look into those soft blue eyes that could have really spoken to her soul, and held spiritual intercourse with her; had she been satisfied or pleased with gentle tones and gentle feelings, and a love that would have been as pure as imperishable, perhaps the beautiful old age might have been hers and his, who now wanders, apart but little thought of, almost wished away when near, and soon forgotten when absent.

But some people seem bent upon making their own miseries—the sweet and the amiable, quite as much so as the perverse. Grace Linden was one of these. As she sat smiling on her white pony, Sylph, her fair hair floating on the sunny breeze, her soft drapery falling from her graceful shoulders, having often to be replaced by the small white hand—Grace Linden, as she sat thus, smiling with a new-found inward joy, was as obstinately bent upon travelling the wrong way in search of happiness, as any poor wanderer ever was in the great wilderness of life.

The church had no doubt much to do with the predisposition of this gentle heart

to cast itself away. College associations were all so interesting and pleasant. The studies of a young man who was preparing for the church imparted so much of what was refined and gentlemanly to his mind and manner. In fact, in the instance before her, this seemed to be all that was wanted; and, "when in orders," Grace Linden amused herself with imagining what her fine handsome companion would be. His profession, she thought, would afford just the kind of restraint he required, and all would be well.

But what was Seymour Clifton doing while these rambling excursions occupied some parties so pleasantly? Sometimes all were together, and Seymour then made the best of things, schooling himself to his fate as well as he could. It was of no use rebelling, even in his heart, still less murmuring; he was not so unmanly as that; but he did think sometimes that if Grace Linden would only smile on him as she smiled upon his brother, he should be a happier man than his brother knew how to be. Yes; and he felt also that he could make her happier in return.

But these thoughts were of no use. The spell was already working, the invisible chain was strengthening link by link. He knew his fate, and he had nothing left to do but to look it fairly in the face. People are apt to talk as if with one great wrench such grinding miseries are got rid of; as if the first agony was the worst, and that being endured, all the rest became more easy. But is it really so? Is there not rather in the first encounter of the enemy—the first recognition of a frightful truth—is there not a kind of energy called forth, a heroism brought to bear upon the encounter, of such force and vigour, that it gives vitality and strength to all the powers of mind and body, and so, in the very greatness of our calamity, we feel great, and live!

It was in this state of feeling that Seymour went about at present, quite a hero, and not a little proud of his own heroism. To himself he talked of sacrifice, and made verses under his old trees about the merit of giving up to another, as if he had anything to give. And all this pleased him for a while, though it made him, as his sister Kitty said, very poor company. It was the writing of those verses with

which she quarrelled, as being a solitary employment; with their theme she was not yet conversant, for Seymour, like all under his circumstances, had no very eager desire to speak of an attachment for one whose preference was so evidently given to another.

After all, we are not attaching to these sudden fits of admiration more than their real worth; for how seldom are amiable, pleasant, and happy young people much thrown together in this idle unoccupied way, without feeling or fancying something like especial interest in each other. A drawing-room acquaintance is quite a different affair; but long country rambles, early recognitions in the cheerful morning, sunset watchings beneath the shade of softly whispering trees, lendings of books, gatherings of flowers, studies pursued together, and idleness perpetual master of the easy gliding hours—who has ever known a party of young people so situated for days and weeks, without some symptoms of especial tenderness stealing over the scene, and colouring, with hues more rosy and beautiful, the whole aspect of nature?

Thus, without plunging into the depths of these young hearts, as if they were about to be seized upon at once and for ever as victims to the tender passion, we would simply indicate that, according to acknowledged custom, that passion was doing its utmost to set all the parties at work upon cross purposes, as if its especial business and calling in this world was to make people miserable rather than happy.

Henry Linden was perhaps an exception to this rule; for Catherine Clifton began to discover, and reported faithfully to her brother Seymour, as she thought by way of amusing him, that Henry was always talking now, whenever he could, with her sister Helen.

Catherine wondered very much at this fact. She could not think what *they* could have in common. But so it was. She felt more and more sure of it every day. And certainly Helen was very beautiful.

Seymour, under present circumstances, did not care a straw whether this fact was so or not, and consequently he felt a little teased by the minuteness and frequency with which his sister reported progress in

this matter; so much so, that he spoke rather sharply to her on one occasion, saying, what did it matter to him or to any one, if it was so? "let them please themselves."

"Only," said Kitty, pertinaciously, "it is so very strange."

"Why strange?" asked her brother.

"Helen, you know, is so grave, so learned, so wise."

"So much the better for him. He requires a companion of that kind to give him a little more wisdom than he seems to possess of his own."

"But Helen is so stately—so cold."

"Not the worse for that either; she will be the less hurt by his flippancy."

"He is flippant, I think, rather."

"Rather? My astonishment, if I felt any, would be that Helen should listen to his nonsense; only that the tastes of women are wholly unaccountable."

"Oh! but he can make his nonsense very pleasant sometimes."

"Not to me."

"And then he is so good hearted—so inexpressibly kind."

"To whom?"

"Why, to Grace, to be sure."

"Who could be otherwise to her? The sternest stoic, the most savage monster, would be kind to her."

"Henry can be kind to other people too. I have known him often very kind to a plain-looking little stupid girl, who, but for him, would have had to walk by herself, neglected and forgotten."

"What?" said Seymour, now looking alive to what his sister was saying, and catching, as he fancied, a slight glimpse of the truth—"What, has my own little Kitty had to feel that she was neglected and alone?"

"Yes," said Kitty, trying to smile; "often, and often, I have felt so, but I did not mind it in the least; especially when Henry looked back, and came and walked with me. We talked a great deal of nonsense, to be sure, and quarrelled continually; for you know he is a great fright; but I am quite alone now, Semy, for you don't seem to care for me as you did."

Seymour drew his arm round his sister's neck, and made her walk close by his side; so close that he could have pressed

his cheek to hers, only that her face was rather turned away, and she did not look up as usual and read the language of his eyes, and so speak with hers; for though far from being eyes to write verses about, Kitty had eyes that saw a great deal, and could speak, too, as well as some that are called beautiful. Now, however, she did not once look into her brother's face, but gazed as it seemed into the trees, and bushes, or down upon the grass at their feet; though all the while she pressed his hand so tightly to her bosom, that his glove came half off in the pressure, and on his wrist he felt such hot tears falling, as he never thought before could come from Kitty's eyes.

"Kitty! child!" said her brother, and he tried to turn the weeping face to his; but this time the obstinate little chin was set in opposition to his hand, and the face could not be turned.

Ah! how was the landscape—the prospect—everything around them changed to the brother and the sister. It was dark rainy weather with them now, and they could neither of them say to the other whence the clouds came, nor why the rain was falling. They were rich, however, in one kind of wealth. They had a boundless store of sympathy each for the other, which they could draw upon and appropriate without any idle curiosity, questioning, or remark. They could look this sympathy, and speak it in a thousand modulated tones, which scarcely needed corresponding words; they could press it out in soft but earnest touches of the hand or cheek; and nothing could rob them of this. It was the household language which they had learned in childhood at their father's hearth; and let them wander where they would, or learn what other speech they might, on returning to each other, this language would be fresh upon their lips, and in their eyes, to both as easy of utterance, and as intelligible as when they parted.

And so this pleasant holiday time, to which all had looked forward with so much joy, had a shadow upon it, a cloud over one portion of the scene, chiefly where those old trees, which Seymour loved so, stretched their branches across the grassy footpath; for it was here that he and Kitty often wandered together when the

sun was setting, or after the moon had risen smiling over the tops of those old trees. The brother and the sister were more together now than ever, but they were more silent in their intercourse. When they did converse, it was frequently about death, and Heaven, both being themes of far-off interest, as they not unfrequently are when talked about the most; but especially, they spoke of the world as a scene of trial, disappointment, and heart sacrifice. Very wearisome would have been that talk of theirs to a listener unconcerned; but it was the best they had under such circumstances, and what were they to do?

In the meantime, there were those not far distant who found and made every subject interesting, who felt no necessity for calling up images of death, and who, when they spoke of Heaven, were very much in danger of thinking they had already found it on the earth they were so lightly treading.

The young party had by this time become divided, as such parties frequently are, into regular couples, who fall naturally into their respective places whenever a walk has to be taken in green lanes, or over sunny downs. And pleasant beyond description were these rural rambles, pleasant the summer weather, the blue sky overhead, the scented thyme on which they trod, the wild flowers in the hedges along which they passed, the song of the never-tiring birds, who seemed to welcome them to bower and brake. All things seemed to welcome them, they were so welcome to each other, so happy in themselves. The hard-working peasants whom they passed looked up and welcomed them; the traveller gazed smiling from his carriage window and wished he was one of them; the cottage woman at her door called to her daughters to come out and see. All who beheld them acknowledged their beauty, and offered some heart-warm tribute to their unquestionable happiness.

After all, is the world so envious as we often call it? Will not glowing health, and radiant beauty, heightened by the warm gush of innocent enjoyment, command its approbation wherever they are found?

Who would have thought either, as the happy-looking party passed by—who

would have thought that that genial influence which is considered the most harmonizing of all on earth, was in reality sowing the seeds of discord and of sorrow so closely around their feet, that, tread where they would, some flower of pleasant promise was crushed, some weed of evil omen struck out into life and vigour? Especially, who was he, proud as a conqueror, who led the party along; walking ever foremost, as if his agile feet scarcely felt the earth which supported them? His was not a figure formed for air or for aerial flights—rather for the substantial purposes of a more earthly existence. Yet, why,—and how has he found sympathy and companionship with one who looks as if her place on earth would only be like that of the butterfly upon the flower, the moonbeam on the dewy grass, or, at most, the nightingale upon the summer spray?

What may not the gentle nature require, which is characterized by such a face and such a form? What of purest love, and gentlest care—of patience, forethought, self-denial, affection most faithful and most holy? And how is he prepared, or even anxious to prepare himself, for rendering all this? As little does he think of these things, or of anything in short beyond the beauty and the rapture of the present moment, as the swallow fluttering past him thinks about the autumnal winds, or the cattle grazing in the fields about the frost that is to crisp the verdant herbage on which they now so plentifully feed.

But if man under these circumstances cannot, or will not think of anything beyond his own pleasure, what is woman doing with her mind? Oh! she is pouring it all out into her feelings, too, but in a very different way. She is thinking—dreaming, rather, of all she will be to him as mistress, mother, sister, friend—of a golden, glorious future, through which they are to walk together, it may be heavenward—of boundless confidence, immeasurable love, and peace which passeth understanding. Yes; to her the experience of such moments has a religion in it, of a certain sort. Would that such religion were not so omnipotent over the affections, nor so often mistaken for the true!



CHAPTER VIII.

A mother's tears! ah, be the daughter's hand
The first to wipe them off: a mother's grief!
Let filial love, with tenderest look and word,
And dutiful obedience, soothe and banish.

"MAMMA," said Catherine Clifton, one day, as she sat at work beside her mother, "are *all* people silly when they are in love?"

"My dear child," exclaimed Mrs. Clifton, "what can you mean?"

"I mean what I say," replied Catherine; "I want to know if it is absolutely necessary to be silly when one is in love?"

"My love," exclaimed the mother, in a still more deprecating tone than before, "you really astonish me; a young lady of your age, to speak out boldly on such a subject as—"

"As love, you mean, mamma?"

"For shame, Catherine."

"You love papa, don't you, dear mamma?"

"Of course I do; but that is quite a different thing."

"Only different in time. You are getting to be old people now."

"Old?"

"I mean a little advanced, you know; not old, certainly; but older than we are, —just a little."

"Very well; what has that to do with your strange way of talking?"

"Only this, that when people are young, and first begin to feel for one another what you feel for papa, and he feels for you, we call it falling in love—that is all."

"You are talking very great nonsense, Catherine; and beyond that, you are talking very improperly. The subject itself is unsuitable for the lips of a young girl like you."

"And for the heart, mamma?"

"Still more so for the heart."

"Well, then, I won't vex you about my poor little heart. I was going to talk about those who are older than myself. What do you think, mamma, of the prospects of your family at present? There! is not that a proper, sober kind of question?"

"I do wish you would be serious, Catherine."

"Surely, dear mamma, you are difficult

to please to day, just when I was so serious, to give me that reproof."

"You did not look serious, and I don't believe you felt so."

"Yes, dear mamma, I am very serious indeed, and serious about this love too."

"You, in love?"

"Oh, dear, no, no, pray don't think that; I have nobody to be in love with, poor unfortunate, that I am!"

"You make me really uncomfortable, Catherine, by talking in this manner."

"I am a little uncomfortable myself, too, if the whole truth was known; but never mind, dear, proper mamma. I won't vex you again. We'll talk about the family; my brothers especially. How do you think they are getting on now in their different vocations? I am sure I speak like a grandmother now."

"I think, Catherine, at least, I hope they are doing extremely well."

"All?"

"Yes, all,"

"Philip? is he doing well?"

"Yes, Philip especially. I had a long confidential conversation with him yesterday, and I was very much pleased with him, I can tell you—very much pleased indeed."

"He didn't commit himself by talking about love, then?"

"No, indeed, he was not so foolish."

"He talked about the church, did he?"

"Yes, and instead of speaking lightly, as he used, you know, he expressed himself quite satisfied with the choice which his parents had made for him, and he seemed determined to pursue his studies with increased diligence."

Did he tell you of any new reason he had found for making these excellent resolutions?"

"No; nothing more than his own increased seriousness of mind and purpose."

"Did Philip say that?"

"Perhaps not in so many words; but that was what I gathered from his conversation."

"And it was altogether satisfactory?"

"As relates to the future, quite so. One thing only troubled me. I find he has been extravagant, and we can ill afford that any of the family should be extravagant now!"

"I am afraid Philip has debts. But

I suppose all young men have at college. At least so he tells us."

"I, also, am afraid that he has. We shall have to make great efforts, Catherine, in order to meet these demands."

"What kind of efforts, mamma? You don't mean there is anything that I can do, surely?"

"You might be more industrious, Catherine."

"My dear mamma, see how I stitch away. All this long morning, while the others are walking out, haven't I been hemming this handkerchief for papa?"

"I don't mean in that way, Catherine. You are a good little girl with your needle, and often help me when no one else does."

"In what way, then, am I to make efforts, so as to help to pay Philip's debts? I am sure I would pay them all if I could; only there is one thing I know—"

"What is that?"

"He should not run into any more. I would pay them once, but never again."

"That is just what I feel, Catherine, and have told him. He is to tell me exactly what he owes; I shall then consult with Robert, for you know we cannot trouble Mr. Clifton now about such matters."

"Still you said '*we*,' mamma, when you spoke of effort; and you said I might be more industrious. You must have had some meaning. Do tell me what it was."

"I meant that you might apply more diligently to your studies; might practise more on the piano; might take up Italian again; and altogether qualify yourself better for—"

"For what, mamma?"

"Well you know, Catherine, when women don't marry—"

"Don't marry! dear mamma. Shall I never be married, then?"

"My dear child, you have a very plain little face, and men, you know—"

"Don't say any more, mamma. I know my poor face very well. I see it, you know, in the glass every day, so there can be no need to tell me about it. Besides which, a sharp pain runs through me when you speak in that way. Please don't say that any more, dear mamma."

"It is better, Catherine, to speak the truth than to flatter you."

"Yes; and when you catch me acting or speaking as if I imagined myself pretty, I hope you will tell me this truth. Until then, be assured, dear mamma, that I know my face, and its defects, better than any one else can know them."

"You were not always so sensitive on this subject, Catherine."

"Perhaps not; but I have thought a great deal about it lately, more than it is quite comfortable to think; and when you tell me I shall never marry—never *can* marry, nor be loved, as other women are.—Oh! dear mamma—"

"Hush, my child; I did not mean to pain you. There are many excellent women, and happy women, too, who never marry."

"Living all alone, mamma?"

"Living in the midst of society, admired and valued."

"I care nothing about society. I only want one person to talk to, always. I could be quite content with Semy—quite happy, or very nearly so, only that he must be so much away. *He* doesn't mind my face, mamma, why should other people?"

"I cannot tell you, child. I only know they do; and I mention the fact as a stimulus to you to apply yourself more to your studies; to make yourself, in short, a wiser woman. I am afraid, Catherine, you have been thinking very foolishly of late."

"I am afraid I have, mamma, and almost wickedly, too. Do you know, the other day—but I won't tell you."

"Yes, do, Catherine. What happened to you?"

"Oh! nothing happened. It was all within this stupid little heart of mine. I never felt anything like it before. I hope I shall never feel the same again."

"What did you feel, Catherine?"

"Something so burning, and so wicked. It seemed as if a hot coal was laid upon my breast, just here."

"You frighten me, Catherine. What was it?"

"I won't tell you who, I will only tell you what."

"Very well, then. Go on."

"You must know, then, mamma, that peeping out of these ugly grey eyes of mine, and they do see a good many things, I saw, once upon a time, the hand of a

lady taken by a gentleman—oh! so kindly—you cannot think *how* kindly! But the hand of the lady looked cold and lifeless; and when the gentleman, as I believe, had pressed it to his lips, it dropped down as if nothing had happened, just like a dead hand, or a lump of lead."

"Well, you foolish little—"

"Don't interrupt me, mamma, just yet. It wasn't about the hand I wanted to tell you, but something I felt here, at my heart."

"What was it, child? I do not understand you."

"Indeed, mamma, I cannot tell. I am talking very foolishly, I know; but why were hearts given to people, mamma, along with plain faces? And why are such cold, cold hands, to have so much tenderness bestowed upon them?"

"I don't know, I'm sure, Catherine. But see, it is time to dress for dinner. Do you think your brother and sister have returned from their walk?"

"Is that all you have to say to me, mamma?"

"Why, child? You are so foolish this morning."

"I know it, dear mamma. I know *that* truth also, better than you can tell me."

"I think you are wrong, Catherine, too, as well as foolish. These subjects must be dismissed from your mind altogether. When are your Latin lessons to begin again?"

"When my brothers go away, if you please. But it is all waste of money, dear mamma. I don't make anything out with languages."

"And your music?"

"Still worse."

"This is a sad account, Catherine. Something must be done. Mrs. Jameson tells me her daughters are making wonderful progress in their Latin under Dr. Greenwood. How would you like to join them?"

"Oh! dear, not at all."

"What would you like, then, Catherine?"

"To be let alone, I think; to do as other people do—as Helen does, for instance."

"Ah! but Helen's prospects are very different from yours."

"Then tell me plainly and distinctly

what you wish, dear mamma, and I will try to do it if I can."

"If you were older, Catherine, I think I should be tempted to let you entirely into my confidence. But you are so young—so very young."

"Some people do better with entire, than with half confidence, mamma; and I believe I should, for one."

"Well, then, dear Catherine, in the present state of your father's health, you may be sure that I have many cares."

"Of course you have, and I wish I could lighten them."

"As I said, you are too young yet; but the time may come when you will be able to assist, and it is for that time I want you to prepare."

"You are such a looker-on, mamma; always providing for the future. But pray proceed."

"Well, under the many cares I spoke of, I consult often with your brother Robert. He, too, is young for the burden he has to bear. You know we are strictly forbidden to speak to your papa on business matters now; so, as I said, Robert and I consult together. Thus it has come to my knowledge that the affairs of the family are not wearing a very encouraging aspect just now; that the business, in short, is not what it used to be. We do not speak openly of these things, and I request you to keep what I tell you entirely to yourself, not mentioning the subject even to your sister. But I want, my child, that you should be let into my confidence, even thus early, in order that you may help me to bear whatever weight may fall upon us; and so to provide for the future, that your brothers and your sister may suffer as little inconvenience as possible."

"And do you want this of me, dear mamma, because you love me, or because I am so ugly?"

"Why, I love you, of course."

"Very well, mamma. Go on, perhaps I shall understand you better after a while."

"As regards yourself, dear Catherine, I want you to look with me into the future; and as you are not likely to settle young—"

"Being so hideous that nobody can love me."

"What nonsense you talk, child!"

"Never mind, mamma. Please go on."

"Well, then, I want you to look a little at what young women can do for themselves, in the way of being independent."

"Oh! I think I know now. Let me see; I am rather quick with my hands, and very active—bustling, poor dear Seymour calls me. I think I should make a pretty good shopwoman."

"How absurd you are, Catherine! It is really of no use talking seriously with you."

"Indeed, mamma, I feel quite serious. What do you think I could do better?"

"There is but one really honourable line of occupation for ladies who wish to be independent."

"I should like very much to know what that is. Really honourable, mamma—what can you mean?"

"I mean to be a governess."

"Do you call that honourable?"

"Yes, certainly, when regarded in its proper light."

"And where are the people who regard it in that light? I'll tell you where they are, mamma, and who they are. They are the angels in heaven, who look down upon this earth, and see through all the prejudices of society—see things exactly as they are. These blessed angels may honour the poor governesses, but it seems to me that nobody else does. Oh! dear mamma, don't make me a governess. I would rather be anything than that."

"I had no idea of making you a governess, now; but how much better, Catherine, that you should be preparing even now for what may probably be your situation at some future time."

"I don't think it ever will, mamma."

"What makes you think that?"

"Because it is not in me to be a governess. You know what a stupid little dunce I am—how difficult it is for me to learn. How, then, should I ever be able to instruct others? Besides which—I am ashamed of what I am going to say, mamma; I hope it is not very wicked in me to say it—but, why not make Helen a governess?"

"Helen, my dear. How you talk! Why Helen has prospects."

"Prospects of marriage, do you mean?"

"Prospects of settlement in life."

"Ah! well. I suppose it is all the

same thing. So Helen is to be settled in a handsome establishment, to be honoured and beloved, and all because she has a pretty face."

"Helen has many other merits besides her face. I am not aware that Helen ever occasioned her parents a single moment's pain."

"Oh! no. Helen always does right; but it is partly because she is so stoical and cold. I pray God I may always love Helen, as I ought; but all this feels very hard. And I am the youngest, too. I have a great mind to go and talk to papa, and ask him if he will let me be a governess?"

"It is at the peril of his life, if you do. No, Catherine, you can surely command yourself better than that. I thought you worthy of my confidence, or I should not have spoken to you as I have done. Do not disappoint me. Do not add to my afflictions, already quite as severe as I know how to bear, when I think of your father's situation."

The desponding tone in which Mrs. Clifton spoke, and the plentiful flood of tears by which her feelings were in some degree relieved, alarmed poor Catherine so much, that she forgot in a moment her own sorrows; and, throwing her arms around her mother's neck, entreated her to be comforted, and to think no more of all the foolish things she had been saying. "I will be a good child to you, indeed I will," she repeated, with all the sincerity of her ardent nature; and then she went on to speak undoubtingly of all sorts of good things happening to the family—prosperity arising out of unexpected quarters; kind brothers uniting to raise up the fortunes of the family; and, finally, a peaceful and happy old age for her parents, in which she herself, a grim little old maid, she said, should be the comfort of their declining years.

Mrs. Clifton was not constitutionally addicted to much fruitless weeping. Her future was always too rich for that, and she lived so much in the future, that she had the happy power of making her world almost anything that was most agreeable to her. Her family were, consequently, so much accustomed to seeing their mother thus sustained, that when her hopeful spirit did break down, it seemed as if the

life-spring of the whole household was giving way; and hence the alarm which seized upon Catherine at the spectacle of her mother's tears.

But to her youngest daughter, alone, was this weakness exhibited. Mrs. Clifton was soon herself again, as cheerful and composed as usual. When the dinner hour arrived, the different members of the family drew together as usual, and saw not a trace of tears upon the mother's cheek. Some of these idle wanderers came in with fresh blooming faces, looking as if they had, that morning, gathered happiness from every leaf and flower; but Seymour came last, and wearily. He had been roaming many miles, in the hope of escaping from his troubled feelings, and he had gained the weariness, without losing the load which still hung upon his spirits.

One event, however, was to happen that day, which never failed to bring pleasure to all parties, under all circumstances. Aunt Ann was expected, and already that kind sister and untiring friend might be seen walking slowly up from the garden, with Mr. Clifton leaning on her arm. She had arrived in her accustomed quiet way, and had first sought her brother in a summer-house, where he was accustomed to spend a good deal of his now unoccupied time.

"The good soul!" said Philip, as he looked from the window. "Why I declare, she has cast away the dear little old cap. Kitty, your fingers have been at work here."

"Yes," said Kitty, laughing, "I was born for a milliner." But she glanced at her mother, and instantly looked grave. The conversation of that morning had left a painful feeling, like the taste of some bitter medicine kindly administered, but swallowed without hope, or faith, or even consciousness of needing it.

It was a remarkable feature in the good lady who now made an addition so welcome to the Clifton family, that whatever their moods or circumstances might be, her presence seemed to harmonise with all. Alone, Aunt Ann made no great figure, nor anywhere, indeed, when considered only in herself. Her character, regarded in its relation to others, was rather like the gray tints in a painting, upon

which the common observer never bestows a comment; but without which, the least initiated eye will soon perceive that all is thrown into harshness, discord, and confusion.

Young ladies at their worsted-work, know well—would that some of them knew better—the value of these gray tints amongst their gorgeous, glaring colours; and we fancy there are in society gray-tinted characters, which fill exactly the same relative position amongst those which are more brilliant. Happy characters they must be, since their peculiar office is to soften, to harmonize, and to bring out what is beautiful in others. Happy characters, and far more enviable than the glaring or the bright; and yet how seldom are they valued at their real worth, until their mild influence is withdrawn, when the strong colours clash together, and the pleasant picture becomes marred.

To Seymour Clifton, especially, the presence of his aunt, on the present occasion, brought more than its accustomed amount of satisfaction. He wanted an older and a more experienced friend than his young sister, now. His mind was more than usually distracted by those conflicting emotions which it was impossible for him to communicate to anyone unacquainted with the deep things belonging to man's spiritual life. In fact, he was just now passing through one of those strange moods to which natures like his are subject, when disappointment, vexation, or mortified feeling of almost any kind, furnishes an excuse for what is called "giving up the world." As if the heart, when crossed and tortured, and filled with bitterness, was then in the fittest state for offering up to God. And yet, how much that passes under the name of holy dedication has been rushed upon, and carried out, with no purer nor loftier stimulus than this!

Many times already, in Seymour Clifton's short experience, would he have cast himself within the shelter of monastic walls, if his religious education had been that of the Romish Church. Many times, and most willingly, would he have pronounced those irrevocable vows which would have cut him off for ever from all social intercourse with his fellow travellers through the world. Now, especially, now

more than ever, he longed to take some desperate step by which an entire break would be made in his habits and objects of life. What, in fact, was he living for? Fame?—What was fame to him? Honourable position in the world?—all empty words. The solitary cell, with bread and water, nay, even daily self-inflicted penance, would have been preferable to him just now, provided only he could enjoy within that cell the presence and the approbation of his God.

With a little more of earthly hope, with a little more of heart-stimulus, Seymour thought he could have gone back to the sea, and perhaps have done his duty there; but now? And yet what had happened to him? No alteration had taken place in his outward circumstances. He had lost nothing. No promise had been broken to his hopes: no friend had deceived—no enemy had injured him.

The feelings which now absorbed so much of Seymour Clifton's existence were not so absurd as they were romantic; and they owed much of their extravagance to the circumstances under which he had been placed. If he was very near being guilty of that folly which is vulgarly called falling in love at first sight, it was because his pent-up affections were all prepared to flow forth towards any real representation of those images of beauty and of grace which had so long fired his imagination, and which so often filled his soul.

As one who is a native of a flat uninteresting country may grow up with the love of mountains, rocks, and rivers in his heart, and so, when he beholds them, that love may gush forth as at the meeting of old friends; so may there be a love of human excellence and beauty which recognises in some fair vision, when first really seen, the living form of that which has had life and long companionship within the silent soul. Yes, and of all human beings, Seymour Clifton was perhaps the most addicted to this kind of spiritual intercourse with imaginary beings. In fact, how else was he to live amongst the strange and rude companions to which his cruel destiny consigned him? Holding this intercourse, living this ideal life, he could endure his lot; not otherwise. Thus, in the dark nights, upon the dreary ocean,

he had seen a form like that of Grace Linden, arrayed in light and purity, walking on the waves, and beckoning him, ever and ever, to some peaceful inland home. With his fair pale cheek shivering in the blast, he had heard a voice like hers whispering—oh! so kindly!—sweet words of a household hearth, where winter fires should blaze, and smiles and pleasant jests pass round, and heart-warm hospitality make the stranger welcome to the plentiful board. Hand in hand he seemed to walk sometimes with this fair being, listening to the blessings of the poor, and feeling that in her they recognised the ministering angel through whom heaven sent alike rewards for their patient toil, and alleviations of their care.

Ah! what had the romantic boy not dreamed while tossing on the heaving waves, living perpetually two lives,—the inner life indissolubly bound up with this fair but imaginary being. No wonder, then, that after all these tender associations had been called into fresh life by his sister's affectionate and glowing description of her friend Grace Linden—no wonder that when the beautiful girl herself appeared before him, and looked and smiled as the fair image on the dark waters used to look and smile—no wonder that his heart at once became a willing captive to her charms, nor that in the space of one short hour, while he walked beside her, he should persuade himself that his spirit had at last found all for which it had been so long pining,—and found all this, too, under a sort of spell, which every moment grew into a fate.

How long Seymour lived in the few hours which constituted this fate, it would be impossible to say. We should have to mark our calculation not by minutes, or by seconds, but by the boundings of a heart which sprung to its new joy, as the captive deer let loose springs to the mountains and the woods. It was the force of the sudden rush of the happiness, not its duration, which made him in one moment a strangely altered being, lifting him, as it were, above the earth, so that he could cast back its paltry cares as the sea-bird casts from its soaring wing the foam of the ocean wave.

Looking around from the height to which this new impulse had lifted him,

Seymour Clifton had felt himself not only rich, but great, powerful, and strong. He knew no fear then; no, not even when he had so much to lose. He was manly in his own consciousness—all that he wished to be—valiant as ever was champion of the olden time; for what would he not dare and execute for her?

Then there was the mild reflection of her smile, which showed him back the image of a nature corresponding with his own; the echo of her voice which answered his as if it came from the world of spirits, where their souls had long enjoyed communion like that of angels; and beyond, and perhaps above all, there was the sweet womanly beauty, the aristocratic bearing blended with the gentleness of sisterhood and affection for his favourite sister. All human as well as spiritual things, and perhaps the human most of all, seemed contributing their value, and concentrating their force in one direction. And thus it was that the stroke fell upon him.

He would not have defended himself from the stroke, even had he known from whence it would come. Had the stoutest breast-plate been offered him, he would have dashed it to the ground. He wanted no defence, he cared for no precaution, he acknowledged no fear. And thus it was that the enemy stepped in, and took possession in the form of a brother; and so entirely do the affairs of the human heart baffle all human calculation, that his brother Philip would probably have been the last individual on earth whom Seymour would have feared as a rival in the favour of Grace Linden.

So it was, however; and the fair delicate girl now leaned upon the manlier arm, as if conscious, and happy in that consciousness, that she had found exactly the support she so needed to guide and sustain her often feeble steps. Accustomed to support from her childhood, Grace seemed naturally to cling for help to those she loved, and to demand it from those to whom she was indifferent; for there was at times an air of imperiousness about her, which only made her gentleness more charming, her tenderness more exquisite in its influence upon others. Perhaps Grace Linden had a little more than her share of natural pride; and this was

all in harmony with her high estimate of those institutions, whether religious or secular, which possessed the sanction of undisputed authority.

All things questionable in their system or foundation were so far objectionable to her. Hence, she most devoutly eschewed, and often called upon others to eschew, those eccentricities in religious profession which led them away, as she considered it, from the true church; and to see Grace Linden in her family pew, with her prayer-book in her hand, was, as Philip Clifton expressed it, enough to make a saint even of him.

All these strong feelings on the part of the fair girl were arrayed against poor Seymour, and in favour of his brother Philip; for Seymour sometimes spoke on religious subjects in a strain which Grace considered far from orthodox. His profession, too, she did not like, thinking it wild, loose, and often corrupting to the morals; and, indeed, so little did the simple-minded girl know of the world and its strange ways, that she fancied Philip Clifton's heart must of necessity be purer and holier than that of his brother.

"If she did but understand Philip better, I think I should be better satisfied," said Seymour, one day, to his aunt, whom he had admitted to his heart's confidence; and who, though a spinster herself, had unbounded sympathy for the tender passion. "If she was not so completely in the dark," Seymour went on to say; "if she was not supposing him to be so very different a character from what he is, or ever will be."

"Ah!" said aunt Ann, with a sigh, "this is so often the case, that love, you know, has come to be proverbially called blind."

"But," said Seymour, "for me to stand by, and see and know all this."

"And yet, what could you do?"

"Speak openly, and kindly to her, to be sure, like a brother, as I desire to be to her."

"And what effect, dear Seymour, do you think this would produce?"

"I don't know."

"But I think I do."

"What?"

"It would make her dislike you, without loving your brother less."

"Do you think so?"

"I feel sure of it."

"Still, if it be my duty!"

"My dear child, for you are a child yet in experience, there is no greater deception,—self-deception I mean, than that which often assumes the name of duty."

"Will you do this great kindness instead of me, then?"

"I don't see how that would much alter the case. Besides which, Miss Linden is no relation of mine—scarcely an acquaintance yet. She appears to be a very sweet and charming girl; but what right have I to meddle in her affairs. No, my poor Seymour, you must look for help elsewhere, than in any interference, either of yours or mine, in matters of this kind."

"I know what you mean, dear aunt, and I think I should be perfectly resigned, and even satisfied, if I thought my brother Philip could ever make Grace Linden happy. Do you know, aunt, I believe he has already contracted debts, to say nothing of habits, which are frightful and disastrous in the extreme."

Seymour, in his earnestness, looked full into the face of his aunt as he spoke, no doubt expecting to see there the expression of surprise and horror, such as he considered his intelligence calculated to call forth. But she was looking at him with a sad smile upon her countenance, and sadder tears in her eyes. She was not thinking of Philip, but of one nearer to her, and perhaps dearer. She drew her arm round Seymour's neck, as he sat at her feet on a green bank in the field where he had taken her to rest beneath his favourite trees; and bringing her cheek very near to his, she whispered softly in his ear, "Beware of yourself, Seymour. You may have as much reason to fear what lies lurking in that gentle heart of yours, as Philip has to fear his passions."

Seymour looked back into his heart, and was silent. Perhaps he detected something there which echoed to the warning so softly sounding in his ear. He clasped the hand which hung gently over his shoulder, and pressed it to his lips.

"Seymour," said his aunt, "do you ever breathe a prayer to this effect—Search me, and try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting?"



CHAPTER IX.

If the heart be foul within,
And corrupt with taint of sin,
Manly beauty is as nought,
But with greater danger fraught.

LEAVING for awhile the re-united party of the Cliftons to pursue their different amusements, we turn again to the oldest brother, and look in upon that new home where he still remains with considerable comfort and satisfaction, even after a trial of some two or three weeks.

The piano has not troubled him as might have been anticipated. Only once or twice in the early morning has he heard a distant sound of music, which might be a piano, or it might be some wandering organist, only that the hour was too early for street-minstrelsy. At all events, it had not deprived him of a moment's slumber, nor had he bestowed more than a passing thought upon the matter. He was, in fact, by far too deeply occupied to think of any kind of music, unless it had disturbed him by sounding close upon his ear.

Robert Clifton had at the present moment a great project in hand. Chance had lately thrown him into the company

of a celebrated engineer, and the conversation happening to turn upon the subject of lands reclaimed from the sea, Robert had subsequently pondered in secret upon a particular line of the English coast, until he saw, or fancied that he saw, a method, barely practicable at best, by which the sea could be driven out; and not only a vast tract of land reclaimed, and brought into cultivation, but a safe harbour made for shipping, and a flourishing sea-port town planted in a spot where nothing was now to be seen but the long waves of a rolling sea.

Perhaps Robert was a little in advance with his town, not having yet rescued the land; but however that might be, he was already planning streets, docks, and public buildings, very much to his own satisfaction, and greatly to the astonishment of the servant Jane, who not unfrequently looked wonderingly towards the great table, where the gentleman's papers lay, though she was ever faithful to his strict injunctions not to touch anything which he left there.

An indistinct impression remained obstinately on the mind of the girl, that some

scheme was concocting in the gentleman's rooms for some kind of blowing-up, either distant or near; and though he seemed, as she said, a kind and a pleasant-spoken gentleman, she never saw such things about in all her life; and she usually concluded by expressing her wonder when it was all to come out,—for that a crisis was approaching, Jane was determined to believe.

Mrs. Maitland, the lady of the house, being constitutionally liable to catch the infection of alarm, felt often a little disturbed about the lodger, only that she was perpetually re-assured by her daughter, who, having once and once only looked him fully in the face, and heard him speak, as she did when they met at the door, spoke confidently of the honest, grave countenance that he had, the upright, manly bearing, and the general appearance there was about him, the young lady said, of one of whom a kindness might be asked, or a service required.

This was all very well and very comforting, while the young lady was present; but no sooner had the door closed upon her departing steps, than her mother began to consult again with her servant, and to listen to the reports which came down from the upper rooms of the house, of instruments, Jane said,—and she had by some lucky chance got hold of the right word, though in her vocabulary its meaning would have been found to refer to some kind of conjuring.

But all was very quiet, and very regular in the department of the house appropriated to the lodger's use, notwithstanding these strange apprehensions. Nobody could say that the gentleman stayed out late at night, or had much company at home. Now and then a person like a clerk had been seen rather late at night, and on one occasion early in the morning; but there had been no suppers called for yet, and nothing, in fact, to which the most scrupulous matron could object.

Little, indeed, did Robert Clifton imagine that his quiet life, his innocent amusements, and his monotonous occupations, could be the occasion of even a passing comment either to mistress, or servant. In fact, he thought little of the people around him, only once or twice he recurred to the pale face of the hurried

girl whom he had met at the door, and who he thought he should like very well to meet again; but, except for the sense of a quickly-gliding figure being somewhere about on the stairs, or in a room above his own, he had no further evidence that such a being was an occupant of the same house with himself. More than once, too, Robert wondered why that thin hand shook so that the key of the door could not be got into its proper place; but he was busy with the building of a town, and he had, consequently, few thoughts to spare for trifles, such as pale faces, and trembling hands.

One evening Robert had so far deviated from his accustomed habits as to throw himself down on a sofa, exclaiming as he did so, "I wonder what they are all doing at home? Let me see," he added, "this must be about the time when Philip was to return to town. I wonder he has never called on me. What a thoughtless fellow he is!"

Scarcely had these thoughts formed themselves into words, when a thundering knock was heard at the street-door; and in another moment Philip Clifton himself was ushered into the room.

Warm, frank, and cordial, was the first meeting of the two brothers, and much they found to say about home and mutual friends. Philip, however, unlike his former self, fell not unfrequently into fits of musing, which his brother observed, and even rallied him upon, without in the slightest degree suspecting there was any but the most agreeable cause for this change of manner. Indeed, Robert was at first favourably impressed with regard to his brother. He thought he had never seen him so grave, and so reasonable before; and though his fine, bold forehead was occasionally crossed by an anxious frown, this was easily accounted for, by the circumstance of his having so recently torn himself away from society so delightful as that which Robert had often had described to him, and expatiated upon, in his sister Catherine's letters, to cheer his generous heart, as the writer said, with the idea of their happiness, even while shut out from it himself.

Thus Robert Clifton had become tolerably well acquainted with Grace Linden and her brother, even while personally a

stranger. He knew of Philip's admiration of that lady, too, and rejoiced to know it. But of late he had heard little. Catherine's correspondence had almost ceased. Her last letter had been written, as he fancied, in a peevish temper, for it spoke of everybody having gone silly; for which remark her brother gave her a reprimand; she had then written no more, and the reason why Robert had been thinking of his family more than usual was, that he had lately heard so little. Thus the pleasure to him of welcoming one of the party, and freely and fully talking all family and domestic matters over, was unusually great to one shut out as Robert was from such pleasant, social intercourse; and he asked of his brother a thousand trifling but familiar questions, which, under other circumstances, would scarcely have been permitted to interfere with the progress of the great plan.

Philip Clifton was not quite so communicative as his brother had expected. We have said he had fits of abstraction quite unusual with him, and along with these, or rather bursting in upon them, he fell into sudden fits of laughter louder than the occasion called for, and somewhat inappropriately timed.

There are few things which spoil conversation more than causeless laughter. Robert wished his brother would be grave, and quiet,—for what he said was more serious and better worth listening to than usual. He wanted to hear about the Lindens too, and the progress of this new attachment: when he touched upon that the laughter certainly did cease, and a very becoming degree of reverence overspread the features of the young man as he said "That subject we will leave, if you please, for the present."

So Robert began to suspect, what was really the truth, that his brother had some painful or unpleasant intelligence to communicate—the difficulty of bringing it forward causing a strange embarrassment which took the form of laughter, and that not until he had freely spoken on this subject could he begin with any other.

At length there was a moment's pause. Robert broke the silence by saying, "And what are you after yourself, Philip? You seem to be a good deal in London. Don't you find it expensive?"

Philip started from his chair, walked towards the fire-place, and stood leaning with his back against the mantelpiece.

Robert thought he had never seen a finer face and figure; but he did not think they belonged properly to the church; and he silently wondered what kind of clergyman his brother would make.

"I want to talk to you," said Philip "very gravely;" and he belied his words by laughing again.

"What is it?" said Robert. "We can never have a better opportunity. Go on."

Philip ran his fingers up through his beautiful hair, set it all standing on end, turned round and looked at himself in the glass, burst into another laugh, and said, what a pretty fellow he was to preach.

"You don't seem to be in a very preaching humour just now, certainly," said Robert. "I wish you would speak out, and say all that you want to say."

Philip took a long breath, and said—"Well, then."—But at that moment he knocked off the mantelpiece the small figure of an Indian god. It was broken by the fall, and he laughed prodigiously at that.

"This is perfect folly," said Robert, rather vexed about the broken figure. "If you have anything to say—speak!"

"Well, then," said Philip again, "I am in a kind of—of fix."

"Fix? Of what kind?"

"A money fix, or rather a want of it."

"You have had your usual remittance?"

"Yes, and spent it before it came."

"I don't know what you mean, nor what you want. I have nothing to advance."

"That's what the old lady tells me."

"Don't, Philip, use that expression. You might surely say mother. I think it is the worst taste possible to give one's parents those stupid, vulgar names."

"Well, my mother, then. I am sure she deserves the name."

"Indeed she does; and now, more than ever, we ought to build up her dignity, and show her double honour."

"I think so, too. She bears up nobly."

"Well then, since we are agreed on that point, let me hear more about your own business."

"The long and the short of it is, Robert, my remittances are not enough. I am in debt, and can't pay."

"I suppose I ought not to be surprised

at what you tell me, such things being so common at college; but I *am* surprised Philip, and disappointed too. We all thought the sum set apart for your college life so liberal."

"I thought so, too, at first,—but it proved otherwise."

"You should have told me so before. I hate debts."

"So do I."

"Yours can't be much, at any rate. Are they?"

"Oh dear no."

"A few tradesmen's bills unpaid I suppose."

"A few."

"And what do you propose to do?"

"That is precisely the question I have come to ask you. I can do nothing."

"Nor I much. I suppose you know that, Philip?"

"That is what my mother told me. But I don't think she meant quite what she said."

"I don't know what my mother said, but I do know this, that the expenses of the family are very great just now; and that money is a very scarce article with me, and very difficult to make sure of. Still, I hate the very thought of these debts, Philip, and if you will just sit down and write on that paper exactly what they are—perhaps you have some account by you?"

"No, indeed. I hardly know."

"Then, why come to me for help?"

"Where else could I go?"

"Why, where indeed? And because we have no rich relations, and no one to look to now that my father is ill, I should have thought you would have managed to keep out of debt."

"It is very difficult at Cambridge."

"So I suppose, or I should not be so willing to do for you what I can. But, come—will twenty pounds help you?"

"Twenty? It won't pay my tailor's bill."

"Fifty?"

"Fifty would do something, certainly. If you could make it a hundred?"

"That would satisfy you?"

"For the present; but I am afraid it will have to be doubled."

"Doubled?—What can you mean, Philip?"

"I mean what I said before, that I am in a horrid fix. But it is the last time, Robert, that you or any one else shall have to pay my debts."

"I hope so."

"I am sure of it."

"Mind this, Philip—if illness or any other calamity had overtaken you, I would not have grudged you my last shilling, but in the circumstances of our family!—I had a little scheme of my own, too."

"What! a building scheme, I suppose?"

"No, not building this time. But it is better not to speak of it now. If these debts must be paid, they must."

Robert walked towards a private desk, took out the key, and was about to open it, but he stopped suddenly, and looking round towards his brother, said with some degree of sternness in his tone—"And the future, Philip? What about the future?"

"Ah! the future is quite fixed, and certain. I am an altered man, now—beginning life upon an entirely new plan, with new hopes, new motives, new everything."

"Be quite frank with me," said Robert. "Does that sweet girl, as they describe her—does she know of your attachment?"

"Yes."

"And returns it?"

"I think so—indeed, I know it."

"And she is as good, and pure, and holy, as they say?"

"As an angel."

"And for her you would——"

"Die!"

"Of course; but what we have to talk about is living. For her you would practice self-denial, patience, perseverance——?"

"Everything."

"You run on too fast, Philip. I want to feel some certainty about the future."

"You may feel the utmost. Nothing is more safe. I never can—I never will be again the fool I have been. As I stand here, Robert, in the sight of God and man, I tell you I am an altered being. I have no tastes now, no propensities that could lead me into bad company, extravagance, or debt."

"Well, then," said Robert, applying the key to his desk, and taking out a roll of papers, at which he looked attentively,

and with something like affection—"Here is one hundred at all events, and we must see about the other."

Philip held out his hand. "How rich and careful you are," he said.

"Somebody must be careful," observed Robert. "Shall I tell you what this money was put away for?"

"Yes, if you please."

"I said I had a little scheme. I thought that for the first time in my life I would this autumn make a short trip on the continent. I was saving, and hoarding, and adding little to little, because I meant to take my sisters with me—my father too, if he would go, and I thought the change might do him good."

"I can't take the money," said Philip, throwing the papers down.

"Why not?"

"You give it grudgingly, I think."

"No, Philip; much as I love travelling, I hate debt more."

"But what a horrid selfish villain I should be to take that money."

"Not to take the money, but to increase the debts which make the using of that money necessary."

"I shall hate myself as long as I live."

"Better hate your own ungoverned passions, Philip. I don't think it is in cool blood that you run into extravagance, or excess. When you think quietly on these subjects, you are right enough; and since, as you tell me, you have found an antidote for your wrong impulses, and have now a right and honourable motive to act upon, with a prospect before you which I could almost envy—since this is the case, Philip, I think I will trust you, though it costs me a pretty sharp pang, I must confess."

"Robert, if you find me, after this, the base, unworthy dog I have been"—Philip could say no more. A sudden choking stopped his voice, and he hid his face in his handkerchief, leaning for a moment over the mantelpiece, so as to conceal the working of his agitated features.

"Come, Philip," said Robert, "be a man. You are very young yet. I don't think there is much harm done."

"Yes, there is," muttered Philip.

"Not more than will soon be set right."

Philip shook his head.

Robert carefully folded up the money.

"Now then," said he, "you must take this into the city. You know Preston's bank?"

Philip held out his hand for the money. He could not speak, but with averted face he pressed his brother's hand, and in another moment was gone.

Many strange sensations pressed upon Robert's heart, as he stood looking after his brother—stood fixed as a statue in the very place which Philip had occupied. It was a cruel stroke to him to have to give up the scheme with which he intended to surprise his family. He had refrained from joining them of late, in order that he might do so with a clear conscience, when the proper time should arrive, and have then no occasion to reproach himself with idleness, or self-indulgence. Upon this pleasant thought he lived, and lived cheerfully; enduring the trial of separation, while they were united, without a murmur. In this thought he had felt rich,—for what a glorious autumn they would all have of it together—their father gaining health and spirits; their mother happy in present things, and forgetful for a while of the future. But his sisters—it was of them chiefly that Robert thought; and in their anticipated delight he had found his own. Now all was gone—the pleasant vision shut out from sight; for what might not another year bring with it of privation and anxiety. Young people like to catch these stray sunbeams of enjoyment; and can bask in their warmth and light with as much satisfaction as if they were to shine for ever. And so it was, that although no one of his own years could know better than Robert what were the perplexities and cares surrounding him, yet was he ready at all times to live, even if only for a day, in an atmosphere of joy.

Thus the pleasure he had planned for himself and his family, was as great an idea as if prosperity had smiled upon them, and promised to welcome them back from their delightful travels. Perhaps it was even greater,—because it appeared to him who planned this pleasant future like a solid piece of real good, snatched out of the vicissitudes of a life, that did not look, on a general view, as if it would have much good to bestow.

It may easily be seen that Robert Clif-

ton inherited his mother's tendency to look into, and live upon, the future. It was, perhaps, well for the family that the oldest son had this tendency; but as he was situated, it gave him an appearance of premature anxiety and care. So much so, that already there were white threads amongst his glossy raven hair, and lines across his forehead, indicating habits of concentrated and earnest thought. But for this anxious look, and a certain sharpness in his features, Robert Clifton would have been scarcely less handsome than his brother Philip; but it was in a very different way. No artist would have taken him for his model; but the look of suffering and the glance of hope would equally have rested upon him, as possessing exactly the kind of directness of purpose, and energy of will, which the weak require for their protection, and the enterprising for their support.

So Robert Clifton stood leaning against the mantelpiece long after his brother was gone. His countenance bore no marks of energy then,—all the will seemed to have died out of him, without leaving a trace behind. His eye gazed into vacancy. He was thinking of all his own life, and the lives of those with whom his was bound up, until he came to think of human life in general—how it was ordered that some should toil and suffer, and others luxuriate and enjoy. His thoughts, at last, became rebellious, for he was a stout advocate for justice; and he could not see the fairness of God's dispensations in these matters. Oftener than he liked, he was troubled with wanting to know *why* certain things were so, as they appeared to him; as if he would have understood had an angel told him. Did his mother understand when she was thus instructed?

But Robert Clifton was more troubled than people generally are, whenever his thoughts assumed this rebellious and questioning character. He was more troubled, because they ran counter then to the whole tenour of his habits, life, and modes of feeling; these being marked by implicit confidence in the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Divine disposer of all human events. Thus a sort of revulsion or confusion was occasioned whenever he began to doubt or question, which

to a nature like his, was so uncongenial that on the present occasion, especially, he felt an uneasy restlessness scarcely to be borne.

In this mood, Robert threw open the window of his bed room, which looked out upon a long range of little London gardens, laid out in their miniature patchwork of beds and walks, and evergreens, with a very respectable embellishment of weeping-willows, lilacs, and laburnums, which, in the clear moonshine of an autumn evening, looked almost as bowery, thick, and rich in light and shadow, as if they had skirted the precincts of a nobleman's pleasure-grounds.

The air was close and sultry, and the din of rolling wheels, and rushing feet, and multitudinous voices not yet hushed in sleep, made up a kind of atmosphere of itself, which those must breathe who would know exactly its effect upon the spirits. But the moon shone placidly upon it all, as if she heard not—heeded not—or had a life within herself so calm and pure as not to be disturbed by any earthly discord, or turbulence of man.

It was a beautiful sight, even there, to see the calm moon shining, and the soft clouds floating past her face, which still kept shining as sweetly and benignantly as if her smile fell only upon mountain-tops in their sublimity, or verdant valleys where the crystal brooks held intercourse in music, or worshipping assemblies prostrate before the might and majesty of heaven, and pouring forth the adoration of the soul in anthems sweet of mingled prayer and praise.

The moon looked down as placidly as if she beheld all this, and this alone,—as placidly upon the streets of that huge Babel, its steaming alleys, and its starving hordes, its Mammon worship, and its haste to gather dust, and heap itself with ashes. Still there were eyes that looked to her as lovingly from out that mass of human life as the child looks to its mother, or the maiden to her lover,—as lovingly as if they saw no other face so beautiful as hers.

Perhaps Robert Clifton was one of these; for he had never learned that love of human beauty which to his brothers, seemed to have grown up with them from infancy. To Robert, and especially to

Seymour, the moon was perhaps more like a friend than to them, partly because he had no other lovely countenance to dwell upon, even in imagination, and partly because he saw the moon so seldom, and never under circumstances in which she looked lovelier or more at home and in her native element than now. Consequently Robert was quite satisfied with the moon as she looked this night, and pleased to exchange glances with her, and to feel her soft pale smile upon his cheek. Neither was he much disposed to find fault with his prospect, as it appeared to him then, nor to quarrel with the smothered din of all around him; for he had no sickly sensibilities, nor morbid fancies about such matters. Human life was to him a great and grand bestowment, rich alike in means and capabilities. He wished that men would use it better; but except that now and then a fit of uneasy doubt assailed him, he looked pretty steadily onward, and thought there was great good, and great glory, in much that human life was engaged in working out.

So Robert sat at his open window, and grew calm. It never took him very long to school his mind so as to make the best of that which was inevitable. The case was not so bad he thought, in the present instance, as it had looked at first. Since no one had been acquainted with his pleasant plan, no one could be disappointed by its failure. In short, the cause of his vexation touched none but himself, and consequently would the more easily be got over. It was too bad of Philip, he still thought, to be so reckless of money, when others had to be so careful and self-denying; but if this attachment prospered with him, all would be well in the end no doubt. A disposition like Philip's required something to keep it steady. A good, manly, honest, openly-avowed attachment would supply him with a sufficient motive for the restraint of incontinence, and the government of those strong natural propensities which were too ready at all times to plunge him into some momentary gratification, making him forget everything else in his own indulgence. But Philip was still young. His heart was good, Robert said more than once, as if to reassure himself that it was so, but at the same time with a certain amount of secret mis-

giving as to the requisite ingredients of what is called a "good heart." Others have speculated upon the application of this term besides Robert Clifton, and wondered what those essentials are which the world takes into account when bestowing this epithet, as it does sometimes, upon its favourites.

While Robert watched the moon at his open window, letting the soft balm of its sweet influence shine as it seemed into his heart,—while he thus thought and mused, neither unkindly nor despondingly, he recognised the dim sound of that music which had so often reached his ear before, and which now seemed as if it came down to him from some region overhead. By degrees the strain grew louder and deeper. There was a human voice now blending with it, so clear and yet so low. Whose could that voice be? He had often heard footsteps in the room above the chamber where he slept. He had heard them chiefly late at night and in the early morning, and so concluded they must be those of the servant, only that they trod so softly as no servant's feet, he thought, ever did. There was an occupant, then, in those chambers above. He had promised himself the range of the highest as a sort of workshop, and had already applied for the use of it to the lady of the house.

As these thoughts occupied the listener, the strain of music rose and fell, swelling at times into passages of a deep devotional anthem, well-known, and easily recognised. To this Robert listened for some time, when becoming more curious, he ventured to look upward from his open window, in order to ascertain, if he could, whether there were lights and moving figures in the room above. But all was dark within, only that the moon shone full upon the window which was closed.

"So the fair musician sits in the dark," said he, drawing in his head. "I wonder who it is. It seems there is somebody, after all, besides the good lady and her child. A little deception has been practised upon me, I suspect. Perhaps there is a maniac enclosed within those mysterious apartments, and that was the foundation of the seeming mystery. No wonder it was so difficult to come at the whole truth."

As Robert brought himself to this most

sagacious conclusion, the window immediately over his own was thrown open. No wonder that on such an evening any one should wish to look without interruption at that glorious moon. Robert had a great inclination to stretch his head out again ; and perhaps he might have done so, but that the low voice began again to sing, this time in a manner more subdued, as if the singer was afraid of being overheard.

Robert remained perfectly still. There was something monotonous and sad in the melody which caught his ear, and which was so near to him that he could now distinguish almost every word.

The strain to which he listened, went on much in the following manner :

Over fields of thymy blossom,
Over beds of dewy flowers,
Now upon the streamlet's bosom,
Now within the whispering bowers,
Soft and slow,
The moonbeams go,
Wandering on through midnight hours.
Lightly o'er the crested billow
Where the heaving waters flow,
Where the sea-bird finds her pillow,
There the glistening moonbeams go :
Soft and slow,
Soft and slow,
Ever wandering, soft, and slow.
Queen of Beauty, robed in splendour,
Finds thy silent foot no rest ?
Looks thy smile, so soft and tender,
Ne'er upon a kindred breast ?
Soft and slow,
Thy footsteps go,
In their silver sandals dress'd.
Queen of Beauty ! canst thou ever
Thus thy lonely task fulfil ?
Sister voices,—never, never,
Answering thee from bower or hill ?
Soft and slow,
As winter's snow,
Fall thy footsteps cold and still.
Silent moon ! thy smile of beauty,
Fainting hope will oft renew,
Teach me, then, thy holy duty,
Waste and wild to wander through.
Soft and slow,
Still to go,
Patient, meek, but lonely, too.

"Soft and slow—soft and slow." The monotonous cadence of these few words was prolonged, and repeated. It seemed especially to harmonise with the hour and the scene, with the hush of approaching night, and with the silent majesty of the moon, now rising high in the heavens ; for there is that beauty in the moon, that

she takes almost any form and character which is appropriate to that of the watcher, with the exception only of levity, or vulgar mirth. The moon is not sad to the happy, nor in their sorrow does she ever seem to mock their grief. The sun does this—the glaring, cloudless, noonday sun, when he shines upon the earth in the full splendour of exulting joy, and calls upon the merry birds to ring out a welcome to him from every bower and tree. The mourner cannot look upon the sun, nor bask within his smile, but seeks the shade, the darkness, the dim twilight of overhanging woods. Happy—thrice happy those who find the "shadow of a mighty Rock in a weary land !" With all sweet, sad, or solemn influences, the silent moon is called upon to sympathise, and to this call she responds ; not, as is sometimes imagined, to sorrow more than to joy ; for there is a deep and intense happiness which is in all respects as still, and often as silent as sorrow : in fact we commit a grievous wrong when we speak of happiness as necessarily loud, boisterous, and exulting ; such is mirth—but those who are capable of the deepest feeling know that there are lower depths, and richer stores of enjoyment than ever yet found utterance in words, still less in laughter.

All deep feeling is still—happiness as well as grief. Hence there are appeals upraised to the ever sympathising moon from hearts so richly laden, that they sail like gold-freighted vessels silently along the bosom of life's ocean, and no one hears their shout of exultation, even when they near some long wished for haven ; for all great happiness is fearful, as well as still. The heart does not trumpet forth its greatest wealth, any more than its heaviest loss, or bitterest destitution. It knows that shipwrecks happen to the barque returning home, and already touching on the happy shore ; and then it has so much to lose, so much to tremble for. Oh, yes, the heart, brimful of happiness, grows very fearful, as well it may, lest even a drop should be scattered, and so lost. To realise this fear is almost to feel that the precious drops are scattered ; but it is also to learn at the same time, how blessed will be that harbour of safety from whence the storm-tossed vessel shall go no more out forever.



CHAPTER X.

With troubled brow of discontent
At thoughts of evening badly spent;
With mind and body ill at ease,
Imperious, difficult to please.

THE remainder of the sum of money which Robert Clifton with so much difficulty spared for his brother, was duly forwarded to him on the day after their interview. Robert had expected him to call for it at the office, but failing to make his appearance at the appointed time, he concluded that the newly-found attractions at home had induced his brother to leave town earlier than he had intended the previous evening, if, indeed, he had not forgotten the money altogether.

"So it is," said Robert, as he folded up the money to send it off by post. "It costs some people very little trouble or anxiety to receive what it feels to others almost like yielding their life-blood to give up. I hope I shall never be a miser; but this is a terrible piece of self-denial. And then to see him so careless, too."

But was Philip careless? Had Robert found him at the hotel where he slept—found him at mid-day, hot, and restless on his bed—the window-curtains of his

chamber closely drawn, to keep out the unwelcome light—had Robert laid his hand upon his brother's forehead, or on his heart, and felt the beating fever and agitation there, he would not have thought him careless; anything but that, for every feature of his face was working with the expression of anxiety, or rather of vexation, intense, furious, desperate, but all against himself. So he had nothing for it, as it seemed to him, but to lie there, calling himself bitter names, and hating himself with all his might.

It is wonderful how some people, who profess, and really almost feel, this kind of hatred, will still most zealously provide for, nourish, and sustain that self with whom they hold their quarrel; and so it was with Philip Clifton, that when he did rise that day, nothing would suit him but the very best of breakfasts. With that he was not satisfied, but rang his bell perpetually, called the waiter who attended upon him ugly names, ordered first one thing, and then another, finding nothing good enough,—and all for the same self he had been abusing for hours, and professing to despise and abhor.

The cause of Philip Clifton's unusual vexation with himself may be explained in a few words, and the shorter the explanation the better. Immediately after leaving his brother on the previous evening, and with the full conviction of his own unfairness and selfishness impressed upon his mind, he had gone to spend the evening with some of his college acquaintances, who rallied him so much upon his unusual sedateness and solemnity of manner, that he drank more wine than usual in the hope of rousing his spirits, so as to be able to bear and to return this railery. Many different amusements for the evening had been discussed; some wanted only to be entertained; some to forget themselves for a few hours: but others wanted money, and Philip was one of these, for he had not yet told his brother of all—scarcely of half his debts.

The fact was, Philip Clifton had lately been plunging rather desperately into the chances and changes of the gaming table; and it struck him on this night, in his half-bewildered state, that if he could win back the sum he wanted, or even a part of it, he should be able to make a more generous return to his brother, as well as to stand in a better position in his own esteem.

The plan and the determination to act upon it were nearly simultaneous. Philip, half intoxicated, rushed out with his companions, played desperately,—and lost.

Such were the circumstances after which the midday sun looked in upon his stupid slumbers. He could not recollect, on first awaking, what he had done. It seemed to him as if he had only dreamed about this additional loss, and would gladly have shaken off the horrible idea as one does the nightmare. But it clung to his breast, growing heavier and more real every moment, until the whole truth glared out upon him, and he was broad awake.

What was to be done? He could not meet his brother Robert under these circumstances—that was most certain. It was certain, too, that he must see Grace Linden again. But why should any one at home be made acquainted with this affair, he asked himself, and took refuge in the idea of concealing it, at least for the present. Philip was not naturally addicted to concealment; but vicious

habits are so mean as well as cruel in their consequences, that they necessarily drag down the boldest spirit to the practice of deception; and Philip had already learned both to conceal and to deceive, especially in affairs of a pecuniary nature.

Philip Clifton was young to have arrived at this stage of a vicious man's career. But the impulsive and violent tendencies of his physical nature were the cause of this reckless haste to run a desperate course; so that where others were kept back by inexperience, and a natural hesitancy, Philip plunged in; and dared the consequences to himself and others. How much of this might have been spared to him, by an enterprising life, with God's blessing, and his mother's prayers! No doubt but God's blessing might have saved him any where; but, as he was situated, all the laws of nature were against him; and surely, while the parent asks the blessing of God, these ought not to be forgotten.

But to cut short these details, not certainly the most agreeable to dwell upon, Philip re-appeared amongst his family as if nothing had occurred. His laugh was still as loud, his step as firm, the glance of his eye as bold, as if he had nothing to fear and nothing to regret. Always given up to present things, he felt too powerfully the influence of the agreeable associations around him to retain any very deep or harrowing conviction of what he had done, or of the consequences which his reckless conduct was likely to bring upon others.

Feeling the past so lightly as he did, it was quite in keeping with such a character to form resolutions for the future in as daring and impulsive a manner as he pursued the pleasures of the moment. That he was about to reform altogether, to lead a different life, and to become a totally altered man, Philip had no manner of doubt. A wonder might have occurred to any other person as to why he should not have begun this new life on the evening which he spent in London. But Philip very conveniently cut out this little piece of experience from the general tenour of his life, as being rather accidental than premeditated, and so as having little to do with the altered character he was about to become. Nor did he, on recurring to the

subject, think so much of the increased sum of money for which he should have to apply to his brother. A few hundreds he did not think made much difference to a merchant. If they failed, they generally failed for thousands and tens of thousands: no doubt their gains were in the same proportion. What could a few paltry hundreds, then, be to them either way? It was only to sell off two or three of those huge bales of stuff, Philip thought, which he had seen in his father's warehouse, and nobody would be any the worse for it.

Such, when Philip thought at all on the subject, was the general tenour of his reflections during the remainder of his residence with his family. He was far more frequently throwing off reflection of any kind, and just living in the present moment, and upon the pleasure it supplied. From frequent association with Grace Linden, his character, or rather his habits of thinking, took, in some degree, the nature of hers; and having but little intellectual depth himself, he could the more easily fall in with the modes of thinking and conversing which were peculiar to those whom he most admired.

Grace Linden observed something of this. Not much to be sure, for she was not looking about her in the way of observation. Perhaps she felt it, rather—felt that this handsome, manly, powerful specimen of God's work in the creation, was deriving so much from her that she could pour into his mind, as it were, her own sentiments, and make them his. In this conviction there was much secret pride. For that reason it found a reception not the less welcome in the heart of Grace Linden.

We have said that deception was not congenial to the character of Philip Clifton. He was naturally so bold and so careless about other peoples' feelings that he felt no necessity to deceive, scarcely to conceal; and feeling no necessity for it, he thought it a mean and paltry subterfuge unworthy of a man. This was before his habits had become such as to bring not only sorrow upon others, but shame upon himself. The case was altered now; for where is the vice that never had recourse to deception, or where is that vicious career, however bold, or manly, or noble-hearted he who runs it, which does not

end in deception—which does not even begin by deceiving?

It was thus with Philip Clifton; the very vices which were making themselves his master, were persuading him that, in the present instance, it was a merit to deceive. Where, in fact, could be the virtue—where even the use of telling the fair girl now learning to derive her support as well as her happiness from him, that he was unworthy of her love. It would be cruel—it would be almost false to tell her this; for he *was* worthy now, or rather he was going to be so. While enjoying her society, and with her pure smile resting upon him, he felt almost pure himself. He was so young too. He had not been long wandering on a wrong course. He had gone rather rapidly, it is true, but he should all the sooner get back again, and all would be right. His profession, his associations, but especially his exemption from temptation, would all keep him right. He should have a few more trials on returning to college, but he would brave them all. He would tell Wellesborough at once; and when the fact was blazed abroad that he was—he did not like, even to himself, to say what,—he only wished they could all *see* Grace Linden. That would settle them; and then if they began to jeer him, he should know it was all envy, and their raillery would fall harmless.

The parting between Philip and Grace Linden was as tender as that of lovers generally. Philip had spoken explicitly, and an explanation had even been gone through, in the presence of old Mr. Linden; who, while he considered the parties much too young at present to bind themselves by any serious engagement, could not find any sufficient reason for withholding his sanction altogether. As a father, however, he chafed under the prospect, however remote, of separation from a daughter so beloved; and in all probability he secretly indulged the hope that so distant a prospect would never be brought near enough to cost him the realization of the pain which it was almost agony to him barely to contemplate. Still he had so seldom thwarted his daughter in anything on which her heart was set, and she pleaded so earnestly and so sweetly in this, and, above all, promised it would be so long, so very long before she could by any

possibility leave him, that the idea grew rather into the resemblance of that of death, which, though certain, can very easily be put off until a more convenient season.

All was satisfactory, then, as related to what Philip left behind him; but no sooner had he turned his back upon the scene of so many tender recollections, than a somewhat unpleasant change came over the aspect of the world as he had to encounter it. It was all very charming to be tracing the paths along which he had rambled with Grace Linden, and to recall again her soft tender trusting words, and, above all, to gaze in idea upon her beautiful face; but he had other business upon his hands now. He had his brother Robert to meet again, and more money to raise; and he remembered too well the character of the last interview to feel very much at ease in the near prospect of a second, which could not fail to be doubly painful and humiliating.

Philip almost wished as he travelled rapidly along, and chafed under the sense of his own folly and meanness,—for he hated the degradation of his circumstances as much as any one could—he almost wished there was nobody in the world but himself and his sweet Grace. It was hard, he thought, that he could not be at once her husband and protector, without having to cringe and beg for money from a brother. This fact seemed to rob him of some portion of his rights, as well as much of his dignity; and whatever Philip could not escape from and did not like, he was in the habit of thinking unjust towards himself. So entirely self-centred is a character like Philip Clifton's, even sometimes when liberal in thought, and lavish in the act of giving.

It was late in the day when Philip reached London. At first he thought he would put off the evil hour, and would even try to put off the evil thought by amusing himself for that evening as best he could; but recollecting that it might be difficult to see his brother alone during the busier hours of the day, he determined at once to seek the interview which he so much disliked, and even dreaded, that while pacing the streets with his accustomed stately and commanding step, he felt secretly like a criminal who has to stand before the face of some awful judge.

Robert Clifton was, as usual, deeply buried in his plans, when a loud knock, which he again recognised as his brother's, startled him from his meditations. It was only a momentary start which the knock occasioned, for he had expected to see Philip about this time, and having still heard little from home, he pleased himself with the idea of the budget of pleasant news which his brother would bring.

But Philip had no thought about news just now. He was going to make a clean breast, and to tell his brother all; and he took no small share of merit to himself for having formed this determination. Such, indeed, is often the case. People plume themselves upon making a virtuous disclosure,—and sometimes even the world applauds them as noble for doing so; when, had it better served their own purposes to be silent, they would have passed on with sealed lips to the end of their lives.

Philip, however, was now going to do the right and noble thing; and so great did he feel when clothed in this magnanimous resolution, that he could almost have thrust the little servant by main force out of his way, as she hovered about the door of his brother's apartments, evidently anxious to find some excuse for entering again after the name of the visitor had been announced.

Implicitly believing that all was right with his brother, Robert gave him the most cordial welcome. He even pushed aside the table on which were spread his never-ending sections, elevations, and ground plans of the new seaport he was building; and drawing two chairs to the fire, put on fresh fuel, and gave many signs of settling down for a long, pleasant chat.

"Well," said he, "and what of Kitty all this time, and Seymour? And how do you think my father is?"

Kitty was well, and Seymour, and even Mr. Clifton, for anything Philip seemed to know to the contrary.

"I suppose then," said Robert, laughing, "I must ask after the one only being in the world; for you don't seem to know much of any other."

"After Grace?" said Philip. "Oh yes. Grace is well,—quite well, I thank you, and looking more charming than ever."

"I have no doubt she does," continued Robert, in the same cheerful, bantering

tone. "I think I shall go and see her myself, Philip, now that you are gone, and try to comfort her."

Philip turned upon his brother the glance of an eagle.

"Nay, don't be jealous," said Robert, "I have no personal designs, I can assure you."

"I should think not," said Philip, "with that ghastly old face of yours."

"You say right," said Robert, "it does grow ghastly, I think. And, do you know, I have found such a quantity of gray in my hair—quite a nest of silver."

"I hope that is not all the silver you find."

"I think it soon will be, or all the gold, either. We are terribly flat here, just now."

"Do you mean that business is flat?"

"Yes, worse and worse."

"I am sorry for it."

"So am I."

"I am the more sorry for it, Robert, because I am come again to ask you for money."

"Money!—you don't mean it, surely?"

"Yes I do."

"But you haven't been spending money, lately?—not since you saw me, at least?"

"Yes I have."

"How?—Where?"

"Sit down," said Philip; for Robert had started from his chair. "Sit down," his brother said again,—"I cannot talk to you if you walk about the room, or stare in my face in that way."

"Well," said Robert, resuming his seat, "I am all attention. Now begin."

"I will," said Philip; "but you are so sharp and short."

Robert's dark eyes flashed fire. His brother might well ask him to turn them away; they seemed almost like beaks that would peck the life out of him.

"Come," said Robert, "don't trifle. Don't be nice in your expressions, either. Tell me the plain truth—out with it!"

Philip did not like this beginning; but he cleared his voice, planted his hands firmly on the arms of the chair on which he was seated, and began.

Robert sat like a statue, only once or twice rising, and then sitting down again instantly. His limbs seemed to be struck motionless, but his eyes flashed lightning

glances from under the black eyebrows which overshadowed them. He had in his fingers a scroll of paper, which he picked and tore into the smallest shreds.

All this while Philip was pursuing his narrative as best he could, sometimes attempting to palliate, but wherever he did so, observing an impatient movement of his brother's hand, which waved him to go on; and so, in time, the history was got on with, up to his previous visit to London,—when he stopped suddenly.

"Well?" said Robert.

Philip began to doubt his own ability to proceed, so dark were the hues under which this part of his conduct presented itself, when seen, as he now seemed to be looking at it, through the purer, clearer view of his brother's upright mind.

"Well?" Robert said again. He was determined not to help his brother out. This punishment ought, at all events, to be his, and his alone—to be the honest and faithful exposé of his own folly and vice. "Well?"

Philip dashed on. He was so embarrassed by the details of his own story, so covered with shame and confusion, that he no longer watched his brother's face, nor, indeed, could have distinctly understood its expression if he had.

"Is that all?" said Robert, when he paused again.

"Haven't you had enough?" said Philip, rather testily,—for people whose self-love is mortified are almost always angry and peevish.

"Enough?" said Robert, rising; "yes, and a great deal too much."

Robert Clifton was not naturally a man of cool temperament, though he schooled himself to appear so. He was not gifted with any superabundance of patience, either; and he had but little charity for those who allowed themselves to be governed by their lowest propensities, as he considered all vicious men to be.

"Philip," said he, "I am not what people call a saint. I pretend to no puling sanctimoniousness about these matters; but if I were you, I would rather go and eat grass and grovel on all fours, than I would ask, or even have, the heart of such a girl as Grace Linden. What a villain!—what a scoundrel you must be!"

Philip had expected a very different

kind of condemnation from this—something more in his brother Seymour's way. He was nettled beyond endurance. His temper rose, and he began to speak in the bold tones of defiance. Soon, however, even his fierce passion gave way before the manly power of his brother's indignation.

"It is of no use," said Robert; "fret and foam as you will, it makes no difference in the world to me. If you don't tell Grace Linden what a life you have been leading, I will."

"You dare not!" exclaimed Philip.

Robert laughed, — but there was no mirth in the momentary sound, which died instantly away.

"You want me to help you out of this difficulty, of course?" said he.

"I do," replied Philip, "though I hate the obligation which I must receive at your hands."

"Never mind that. If I pay you any money, I do it in the name of the family, not in my own person; and if you spend more than you have a right to, you spend what belongs to the family, not to me individually. According to my notions of honour, all who lose by you ought to be made acquainted with their loss, and how it happens that they are losers."

"Oh! yes, to be sure. If you tell one, you had better tell all. I would have it printed, if I were you, and sent round amongst all the people you trade with."

"Come, Philip, this way of talking is neither good for you nor me."

"As soon as you are ready to begin a different style of conversation, I am."

"Very well, then. Now declare to me honestly, Philip, as you are a true man, have you told me all?"

"I have."

"You have stated to the full extent the sum that is necessary to clear you of all debt?"

"I have."

"And you are ready, if I raise this sum, to begin a new life?"

"More than ready."

"Determined?"

"So help me God!"

"Come, that is well. Now we will turn to business. Let me see, by the way, do you think there is anything in what I hear about Helen and the brother of Miss Linden?"

"I think there is."

"Would Helen, in that case, be likely to want a marriage portion, soon?"

"Not for an age."

"Kitty, poor little soul, will not want anything."

"I should think not."

"Very well, then. I'll talk to Smithson to-morrow."

"Who is Smithson?"

"Our head clerk."

"You'll tell him, then?"

"Of course I shall. He is quite confidential. He knows all our family affairs. I don't know what I should have done without telling him; you know I was so young to embark in such a concern. But I never had anything disgraceful to tell him before."

"Must he know?"

"Yes; and why not? I think they ought all to know."

"All!—who?"

"Those of whom I spoke before. There's something, as it seems to me, so mean, so despicable in allowing those we love best to think well of us, when we don't deserve it."

"When we don't intend, or wish to deserve it, there is; but that is not my case."

"Ah! Philip. How I do wish it was possible for me to trust you!"

"I think you might."

"What, after the night you tell me of? After what you did immediately on leaving me the last time you were here?"

"I look upon that as purely accidental. I had not begun my new life then. I had only intended to begin it."

"You think you have begun it now?"

"I do."

"You feel this confidence without having been tried by a single temptation. Oh! Philip, you are too fine a fellow to make yourself so great a fool."

"Call me any name that you like for the past, only believe me for the future."

"I know something of this gambling propensity of yours, Philip, though you would hardly believe it."

"You?"

"Yes, I. There was a time when my evenings were very dull and tiresome, and I had a reason for wanting a little extra money—there was a time when I just felt

the passion enough to understand what it is."

"And what cured you of it? Did you lose?"

"No; I was very successful for so short a career; but I hated the money that I gained, and was never satisfied until I had given every penny of it away to poor people."

"What made you hate it, when you wanted money so much?"

"It was this, in part:—when I looked round the room, and thought about the young men there,—I knew a good many of them or I scarcely should have gone; when I thought about their circumstances, and considered what they were doing—what we were all doing, in fact—I saw that we were a pack of mean despicable robbers; for one half of us, at least, were risking money that was not properly our own. One was betting away his sister's little fortune,—that is, what would have been hers; another was drawing upon the provision his father had made for the widow he was about to leave behind him; a third was depriving his younger brother of his honourable and rightful education; and so on: so that whether we lost or won we were equally mean. Indeed, Philip, all vice is mean, according to my estimate of it."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, and cruel too. I know of no vicious habit which is not cruel as well as mean. Look at the streets of this crowded city. Who are the most wretched beings that tread its pavement? They are the victims of vice in whatever form they may appear. And yet young men of these free habits call themselves fine-spirited, noble fellows—injuring nobody but themselves. Bah! you make me sick of the world and its ways—but most of all, its horrible injustice."

"And its cant?"

"Yes, its cant, if you please. But remember, Philip, there are other kinds of cant besides religious cant. The man of the world has his cant as well as the pretended saint, and a very hateful kind of cant it is. Above all others, I think I do most detest the cant which assumes a liberality and even tenderness to all that is vicious or unlawful, but closes the ear of charity to all that bears a religious character, calling it sectarian, narrow, and what not.

As if the narrowest creed which recognises God and his laws were not better for mankind, even in a worldly point of view, than open blasphemy and lawless unbelief."

"You are bitter, Robert."

"I am afraid I am bitter, Philip. Look you, I live in that dark miserable office all through the blessed summer and the golden harvest of the year. I neither enjoy society, nor travel, nor see the sights I should so much delight in. Every morning I awake to a fresh load of care; every night I lie down to sleep under the weariness of a premature old age. This is the life I am leading, Philip,—and you?"

"Why reproach me, when I tell you it is all over. Let the past be past."

"Well, then," said Robert, holding out his hand to his brother—it was a thin white, bony hand—it pressed the red palm of one which might have belonged to a giant; but it was cordially grasped, and the brothers were about to part in peace, when Robert said suddenly—"Just one word more."

Philip returned somewhat reluctantly.

"About the future," said Robert; "I am not so blind to the weaknesses of human nature as not to know that you may be perfectly sincere in your good intentions now, and yet they may fail you under the very first temptation. I have given you my entire belief, Philip, as far as regards the present; but what is to be my pledge for the future?"

"I will write to you," said Philip.

"And tell me all?—Will you tell me all, Philip?"

"If you require it, I will."

"Mind you, Philip, I don't require it for myself. I should be sorry indeed to intrude upon your privacy, or any man's; but for that young lady——"

"And pray what have you to do with her?"

"I have this to do with her, that unless your habits are really altered—unless they are so altered as to have borne the test of time, too, I will stand by what I call honour, whether you do so or not; and I will make her acquainted with what you are."

"She would not believe you if you spoke against me."

"But her father would."

"You would never be so mean as to tell him."

"Call it what you please. In you it would not be mean ; it would be honourable, just, and true. But if you will not discharge this duty, I will."

The last words of this sentence were uttered in a tone which left no doubt upon the mind of him who heard them that the purpose they expressed would be carried out. Philip had consequently nothing for it but to submit, which he did with a good deal of secret unwillingness ; at the same time that he repeated his promise to make his brother acquainted with all the circumstances of the new life upon which he was about to enter, without a single doubt or fear.

And thus the brothers parted. Long after midnight Robert was still standing in an attitude of deep thought. On, and on, until the early morning hours he remained the same. At last, with a sudden start, he roused himself. Looking down at his neglected fire, he saw that a few embers still remained. To these he applied a lighted match. Then he went to his table, and, without selection, gathered up all the papers with which it had so long been spread over. As if the effort he was making required more than his accustomed determination to carry it out into action, he never examined one, nor hesitated, nor lingered over the most elaborate of his plans ; but crushed them altogether into the fire. Then, afraid of the consequences, he heaped them over with ashes, beat them down into a smothered mass, and so watched them smouldering away until the last shred was utterly consumed.

O ! what a world of thought and interest was there, curling up into the white smoke, and now and then blazing into a sudden flame. Persons of naturally creative genius do not bear well to see anything destroyed upon which their time and their talents have been employed. If Robert Clifton had no morbid tendencies, he had plenty of temper, and quite an average amount of perverseness, the gift of Nature ; those who have great energy of character, generally have ; and hence, he was not particularly well prepared to meet in a smiling and submissive manner those crosses of the will, and those personal privations, which occur as the consequence of other people's

unfair indulgence of themselves, or unjust encroachments upon the rights of others. The class of calamities, generally called accidental, Robert could sustain with more equanimity than most men of his age ; or those which we habitually attribute to the immediate instrumentality of God. To such he bowed with manly, but reverend submission. But that his whole family should be robbed, as he considered it, by an idle, selfish, vicious brother,—there was no bearing that thought with common patience ; and Robert stirred his blazing fire, heaped on more papers, and wished he could burn himself amongst them.

In process of time, however, this humour very naturally cooled down, giving place to thoughts and feelings of a more reasonable nature. Robert still maintained the same determination, to deny himself more than was absolutely necessary, because he fancied that a desperate wrench from all his favourite occupations, would set him more at liberty to pursue that course of severe and unrelenting duty which now lay before him ; but after he had thought again more coolly, the spirit of destruction cooled also, and he began to think his papers, plans, and drawings, might be quite as well committed to the safe keeping of lock and key, as to the flames. Thus before the morning dawned, he had begun to make selections, to clear off such fragments as were absolutely worthless, and so better to preserve the rest. This was a work of time, and no inconsiderable amount of interest, so that Robert felt it would be useless attempting to sleep that night. The morning consequently found him pale, haggard, nervous, and still irritable ; but with considerable clearing of his drawers and tables, and with a mighty pile of waste-paper which he thought might safely be committed to the servant to destroy.

Thus the wondering Jane, on the following morning, found herself the possessor of a vast amount of miscellaneous property, which she would have been the least likely person in the world to destroy without careful examination. The whole, however, was carefully preserved for the benefit of her young mistress, who, she thought would understand the matter better than herself.



CHAPTER XI.

Attired in plain yet tasteful dress,
Behold our dally governess;
She hath a form of slender grace,
A modest look, and pleasant face.

ON the morning after the interview with his brother, Robert Clifton entered again into arrangements with the lady of the house where he lived, for appropriating the range of apartments already alluded to for his own use. They appeared to be of no value to any other member of the household, and the payment of a very small equivalent was considered quite sufficient to entitle the lodger to call them his own.

But Robert did not now want this additional accommodation for the same purpose as before. He had intended to convert the long attic at the top of the house into a kind of workshop, or more appropriately into something that would be half laboratory and half studio; for many sciences, and chemistry amongst the rest, were now contributing their share to fill up his few leisure hours. Now, however, he was intending to have no more leisure hours—to have no more enjoyment. With a kind of wayward determination, he was about to give up everything that was

pleasant to him, without being absolutely necessary. If, he said to himself,—though he might not say, he felt—if it was his fate to have to give up so much, why not all? So he would work no more at his plans—he would not even design plans; he would have nothing more to do with papers, pencil, rule, or compass; he would be the mere office drudge which his father's clerks were; and thus he would go down to old age never married—never anything but an office clerk, with the weight of a whole family upon his heart, even while sharing in none of the social pleasures which a family affords.

If it should seem strange that one of so strong and healthy a mind as Robert Clifton should yield to the morbid feelings which now oppressed him, it must be remembered that he was then, and had been for years, a man entirely out of his natural element. It must be remembered that he lived, for the greater portion of his life, in a dark London street; that he worked incessantly in and amongst that which had no interest for him, or in other words, which never called into action any of the prominent faculties of his nature. Above all, it must be remembered, that he

worked on in this way without social intercourse, and without much hope of ultimate success in securing the ends for which alone he felt it his duty to work. The man who works in his element—that is, finding use for the faculties which he possesses in the highest degree, whether he has hope of success or not, still lives in a healthy atmosphere, still breathes an air which soothes his spirit and sustains his mental powers. Such a man is prepared to struggle with difficulty, and even to support disappointment, because of the mental health which he enjoys. His pulses beat healthy time, his spirit lives and glows within him; his faculties, awake and active, are ever ready with resources. He feels within himself that he is a living man, a competent and active agent in that which has to be done; and he does it with alacrity and zest. What is there which man cannot do, yes, and suffer also, under such circumstances?

It is true the human mind has wonderful powers of adaptation, and may often throw itself into circumstances and occupations, which looked impracticable at first; but in almost all such cases, there has been some latent power or faculty brought into exercise, which had existed before without being known or understood. It is far from being an argument in favour of our incompetency, that we do not like to do a thing. If the young were to make their selections in this way, they would often show an estimate of their own abilities no less amusing to their friends, than fatal to their own success. But the mother might surely make discoveries in this field of observation so as to arrive at something like a sure conclusion. The mother—the patient watcher, the companion of long hours of unrestricted intercourse, the sharer of amusement, the recipient of heart confidence—she who has the lynx eye of detection wherever any kind of physical development gives indication either of extraordinary beauty or defect—the mother might surely discover for her child that for which nature has best fitted him, and so aid in the choice of circumstances, that they shall work for, rather than against, him.

Infinite pains and labour are often bestowed by the mother upon the bodily comfort, and even the bodily adornment of

her child; expenses, limited only by impossibility, are often incurred in correcting the personal habits and physical defects of her child; but there are defects of character, short-comings in the way of duty, heart struggles accompanied by sore blemishes of life and conduct, which, without for an instant pretending are not attributable to the general fallibility of our nature, we still believe the parent might do much to alleviate and modify, by discovering in time what is the natural tendency of the child's character, and taking that into calculation in the disposal of his lot in life. In a state of perfection all men would be able to fill all situations. Weak and fallen as we are, and retaining about us only a few scattered traces of this perfection, we need all the helps which natural sagacity can suggest, and all the advantages which a reasonable choice of circumstances can afford.

Robert Clifton had been so long working on in spite of these, he had pursued his course in a manner so solitary and uncheered, that there could be no wonder if the healthy tone of his mind was now beginning to give way. A more enlarged view of the world, a journey, or almost any break in his accustomed occupations, would have soon restored that tone, and made him all his better self again; but the very impossibility of anything of this kind happening to him now; the lost chance of a very reasonable enjoyment which he so much needed, and had so fondly calculated upon; the increased pressure upon his energies to furnish those resources which a selfish brother had so recklessly squandered on his own indulgence—all these facts had found him in a condition peculiarly unfitted for bearing them with serenity of mind; and hence the petulant determination which he repeated at last in words—"If so much is required of me, I will even give up all."

In this mood Robert was preparing to set aside all his favourite pursuits so as to lead a life of "hard duty," as he called it, unrelieved by amusement of any kind. He consequently busied himself on the morning after his brother had left him in conveying as much of his property as he had time to collect together up to the attic, where, he told himself, it should remain untouched perhaps for years. An

additional cause for his morbid feelings might have been found in the sleepless night which preceded this laborious task; but he worked away with great determination, and even felt better for the muscular effort he was using.

In passing so frequently, even in this hurried manner, up and down the stairs, Robert could not remain insensible to the fact that the apartment immediately below the attic was occupied. Indeed, he had heard those gentle footsteps which he was now able to recognise passing to and fro, as he fancied, in a more hurried manner than usual. Once it must have been mere imagination; yet once he started in passing the door, for he thought there was a low sound of something like sobbing, and a half moaning voice seemed to reach his ear when he applied it nearer to the door. There was, then, he thought, what he had often suspected, a maniac in the house. Poor wretch! There was then a being more miserable than himself within those walls. He said truly, for such indeed there was.

Another time, as Robert descended the stairs, he saw the door of this apartment open. Curious as he felt about the mysterious occupant, and naturally anxious to see who or what might be about to pass before him, he involuntarily stopped, and remained silently upon a higher part of the stairs. To his surprise, it was the figure of that slender girl again; but this time her movements were neither so light nor so quick as they had been before. Indeed she held a white handkerchief to her face on coming out, and once or twice, after descending a few steps, she applied it to her eyes, as persons do when endeavouring to wipe away the trace of recent tears.

In this manner the figure passed on. Robert could hear a few words of familiar expression in the hall below. Jane, the servant, was evidently receiving directions, and making promises of faithful obedience; the outer door was then opened, and shut; the weeping girl was gone.

"I wonder whether I could help that girl?" said Robert to himself as he now went on, feeling more at liberty to pursue his work. As he passed the still open door, he could not resist the temptation to look aside into the mysterious apartment. It was a long, barely-furnished room, hav-

ing neither window-curtains nor carpet, except that one little strip lay across beside the fireplace, where there was no fire.

"What a dismal room for a young girl to live in!" said Robert to himself, and he almost shivered at the thought. "But what does she do here?" he pursued,—for he really was guilty of lingering so long as to be able to pursue these thoughts—"what *can* she do here?"

A table at one end of the room was spread with loose papers in a state of great disorder, some of them having fallen to the floor; but except for this, there was no appearance of confusion, rather a scantiness of means, except in the musical department. At one glance Robert beheld, not only the dreaded piano, but a harp, and on one side of the room hung a guitar. But still the room looked bare and comfortless; and it was from the window of this room, he now remembered, that he had heard that sweet voice in the moonlight. "What an existence it must be," he thought, "for one who can sing so sweetly to live pent up in such a room as this; and so early in the day, too, as this existence begins. Why, it is even more miserable than my own."

But it was now high time for Robert to set off to the office. He was a little sick at heart, on leaving the house, with the idea that he should never return again to his favourite occupations; and the fact of this privation being entirely self-imposed, tended in no degree to soothe his ruffled mind. The only satisfaction he could lay hold of, seemed a very unamiable one, for it arose out of the conviction that there were people in the world as unhappy as himself, and as much out of their natural element. Why should this conviction bring cheerfulness to him? And yet it did so to a certain extent. At all events, it roused him into fresh and different views of human life in general, so as to carry away his thoughts from the exclusive contemplation of himself, and his own privations, anxieties, and cares.

That night Robert was much later than usual in returning to his lodgings, this being a part of the life of self-denial laid out for himself, that he should spend at least two hours more every day at the office. The servant who opened the door

for him had a meaning in her look, as if something had happened, or was about to happen, of momentous interest in the house. A note lay on the hall table, which she took hastily up, and placed in his hand with an expression of countenance which seemed to say, "There! read that."

But Robert would not gratify her curiosity by reading his note in the hall. He recognised in the writing the fair clear characters which he had observed before; and he would not even break the seal until he had closed the door of his apartment, drawn his chair to the fire, stirred it carefully, and placed his feet upon the fender. Then he opened the note. It was addressed to himself, very cold and very formal.

"Miss Maitland presented compliments," and so on. The drift of the whole matter was, that Miss Maitland having discovered amongst the waste-paper given to the servant to burn, sundry specimens of architectural drawings, extremely well executed, she was pleased to say, begged to know if she might appropriate the same, having just now especial need of practice in that branch of art.

"Indeed," said Robert, "I wish the poor creature had had all that heap which I burned last night. These are the most contemptible scraps. What can she want with them? Let me see. What can I do for her? I wonder whether it would be possible to speak face to face with Miss Maitland?"

Robert rang his bell,—and the servant came, wondering, up.

"Can I speak with Miss Maitland?" said he.

"Oh dear, no!" exclaimed the servant. "I should think not."

"Why not?" asked Robert.

"Because mistress has gone to bed."

"In the sitting-room?"

"Oh! dear no."

"Well, I only want to speak to Miss Maitland in the sitting-room. I wish you would ask her to see me."

"I am quite sure, sir, she won't see you. She never does see gentlemen without missis is in the room."

"Not on business?"

"I should say not."

"Just try for me this once. Miss Maitland has written me a note."

"I know that. I knew it before she wrote it."

"Very well. I cannot answer this note so well if I write. Just present my compliments, and say what I bid you."

"I will if you wish it, sir."

"Of course I wish it."

The servant was about to go on her errand, but stepped back again. "You'll remember, please sir," she said, "Missis sleeps in the back parlour. There's only folding-doors between. Every word can be heard."

"So much the better," said Robert. "Now go about your business."

The servant obeyed; and, contrary to her expectation—contrary to all precedent—her young mistress answered that she should be very happy to speak with Mr. Clifton on the subject of her note, and that he might come in.

As Robert entered the room, he was again forcibly struck with the elegance as well as the comfort of all the arrangements of this apartment, so different from the almost vacant one up-stairs, into which he had presumed to look. But his curiosity was more attracted to the face and the figure of Miss Maitland, whom he immediately recognised as the trembling girl who had made such unsuccessful attempts to let herself in at the door before him. Hers, too, was that slender gliding figure, slight glimpses of which he had so often caught, and hers the weeping eyes which had that very morning to be so often dried before she could meet the inquiring glances of her mother or the servant.

But Miss Maitland looked very unlike weeping now. She received her visitor quite cheerfully, and even laughingly, making very light of the matter in hand; and though she smiled at its trifling nature, begging, with much modesty, that he would pardon her the trouble she was giving him.

Robert of course could not feel troubled in such a cause. Of course he said everything that was polite and proper to be said, but he very naturally desired some further explanation in order that he might more effectually render the service which he felt more than willing to afford.

"In your note," said he, "you spoke of architectural drawings as likely to be

useful to you. I have many of this kind in my possession, from which I shall be glad if you will make your own selection."

"I wrote my note," said Miss Maitland, "I fear, rather rashly, for the worst of the affair is, that I really do not know exactly what I want. I am so ignorant of drawing myself, and yet—"

Robert saw that the eye of the speaker was turned sharply, and at frequent intervals, towards the door which he supposed to communicate with her mother's sleeping apartment; and it was evident that her ear was listening to detect any sound which might issue from that quarter; but she spoke in a full clear voice, and evidently without any wish, at this stage of the conversation, to conceal or disguise what she was saying.

There was ample time now for Robert to make observations upon the countenance, expression, and manner of the young lady herself, her own attention being so much occupied as scarcely to notice to what object his looks were directed. Indeed, Miss Maitland seemed all attention; and there was about her rather a business-like appearance, quite premature in one of her age. She was, consequently, very direct in what she had to say about the drawings, only Robert could not help fancying she had a slight inclination to say more, or rather, what would be more to the point, than she wished the individual beyond those folding doors to hear.

"I am so ignorant of drawing myself," said the young lady, "that the merest scraps—the barest lines—the first rudiments, in short, would perhaps be more useful to me than a highly-finished subject. You understand drawing perfectly yourself, I suppose?"

"I am not an artist, but I think I know enough to be able to assist a beginner."

"Then you can tell me, I dare say, whether it would be possible to learn the art so as to teach it in a month?"

Robert smiled—"There are," said he, "so many ways of teaching, such different kinds of pupils, and—"

"You mean," said Miss Maitland hastily, "that I could not do it—that it is of no use making the attempt?"

"I mean nothing of the kind," said Robert; and he spoke the more earnestly, because he saw that a sudden cloud had

come over the young lady's face, and that her lip quivered with the sharpness of some unexplained suffering or emotion. "I mean nothing of the kind," he continued; "and if you will be good enough to tell me frankly what your intention is—"

"Oh! I intend nothing," replied Miss Maitland; "I only wish."

"Your wish, then—"

"I wish, in plain words, to undertake a situation for which I am not qualified. How is it possible to help a person in so questionable a position—questionable even as to right and wrong?"

"Still, I don't despair, if the art of drawing constitutes the difficulty. There is so much in setting about it in the right way."

"That is just what I thought. And that, in fact, was my sole reason for intruding in this way upon the time and attention of a stranger. Our servant, who is rather a busybody, with all her good qualities, brought me these. I hope I have not done wrong in keeping them? She said they were given to her as waste-paper, and to me they looked so beautiful! Oh! if I thought I could, by sitting up all night—"

Miss Maitland started. There was, without doubt, some kind of sound within those closed doors; but she soon went on to say—"If I thought that with the utmost diligence I could make even tolerable drawings of this kind, I should"—she hesitated; and then concluded by saying that she should be "very happy."

"As regards your own performance, I have very little doubt," said Robert. "It is the teaching of the art to another, without being fully acquainted with the principles, that I fear."

Miss Maitland fixed upon his face, as he said this, the full clear gaze of intelligent understanding. The eyes which looked at him were only gray, but they were full and finely set, overarched by eyebrows of the most perfect form, and yet most delicate in line and colour—such eyebrows, in fact, as give expression and meaning to every word; and Robert saw at one glance that his deeper feelings, in short, the moral of his meaning, was not only fully comprehended, but shared in and approved.

"Ah! yes," said Miss Maitland; "that

is the question, indeed. I see enough of pretension, in the line of life which I pursue, to make me wish to keep my hands clear of it as long as I live. But the pupil I should have to undertake is only a little boy of eight or nine years old, and very ignorant, I understand."

"And you are really in earnest?" Robert asked.

"More than in earnest."

Miss Maitland again turned her head, and looked intently towards the inner room. As she did so, a deep blush suffused her usually pale countenance. Robert saw, too, that the profile of the face, head, and neck, which this turn displayed to him, was finely marked—nay, almost perfect in its contour. But the movement was innocently made, or the profile would have had no charm for him. More than that, it was made in the most perfect ignorance; for, whatever the mirror may reveal of personal beauty to its possessor, there are outlines of general form, and graceful turns, and gentle movements, of which no beauty, however flattered she may be, can form an estimate for herself.

Leaving Miss Maitland for a moment to discuss the subject of drawing with one who understood the art much better than herself, we will turn to that particular passage in her history which had driven her to the expedient of consulting a gentleman, and a stranger, upon the project which now occupied so much of her attention.

The reader may already have arrived at a suspicion of the fact, that Mary Maitland was a daily governess. It may be surmised, too, that she was not born to this kind of employment, but rather to the expectation of enjoying, through life, the luxuries and indulgences upon which so much of her mother's happiness was still dependent.

Mary, though born in India, had been sent to England to be educated. All that her parents asked of those to whom her education was entrusted being just to fit her for what is called society, she was studiously trained to be a great proficient in music, but scarcely in any other branch of learning. In fact, she had a genius for music, but for all other things only a fair average of talent. So to music she

was most encouraged to apply with assiduity; and in this accomplishment she did great credit to the school in which she had been placed. Nor was it ever a subject of regret to Mary, that she had applied in this manner to the study and practice of music. She only wished, and that she did wish with many a bitter tear, that she had applied to other branches of learning with the same industry and perseverance.

With prospects of life before her as promising as they were congenial to her taste, Mrs. Maitland found herself, by some unexpected accident, left suddenly a widow, and almost without provision for herself or her child. But, instead of looking her circumstances fairly in the face, and meeting them with promptness and decision as best she might, weeks, months, and years passed on, and she was still listening to the advice of friends, still consulting lawyers, and still clinging to every straw which rose to the surface of her troubled existence in the hope of obtaining the relief which her circumstances needed, and which she fancied that her husband's services had entitled her to claim in the form of a salary or pension for life.

It is needless to say, that Mrs. Maitland's difficulties wearied others more than herself; and that at last, when all her friends were agreed in recommending her return to England, it was at least as much for their own sakes as for hers. To England, then, she came, to plead with official persons, and to consult with lawyers, until her slender means became entirely exhausted; and even then, up to the present time, when her daughter was her sole dependence, it was with the greatest difficulty that she could be kept from again plunging into the ruinous expenses of the law.

Under these circumstances, and early made acquainted with her mother's fruitless hopes and frequent disappointments, Mary Maitland had grown up to a thoughtful and premature womanhood. Very sad is that premature age upon the brow of youth; but Mary was not sad—at least not often so, only now and then a sudden and unexpected addition to the weight which she had constantly to bear would steal another youth-tint from her lip and

cheek, or send into her eyes a fresh gush of tears. Upon the whole, she bore up with wonderful vigour, and even vivacity, especially as she grew older, and more competent to act for herself and others; and not the less so, in all probability, that she had recently taken very much into her own hands the entire management of her mother's complicated affairs.

These, however, it must be acknowledged, were managed by the daughter in a very simple manner, being merely got out of the lawyer's hands, and let alone. If she could keep her mother quiet, soothe her anxieties, and inspire her with a spirit of cheerful trust, this was the highest happiness to which Mary's ambition ever reached. But this was very difficult; for Mrs. Maitland, naturally somewhat selfish, and repining, had been so long accustomed to the luxuries and elegancies of highly-polished life, that to have to give up any personal indulgence was sufficient at all times to throw her back into a state of fretful despondency, which Mary found it extremely difficult to bear.

We have said that Miss Maitland was employed as a daily governess. This was her only resource. She could not leave her mother altogether—even to leave her for a few hours was often the cause of painful anxiety to her own mind, and of deep distress and heavy complaining on her mother's; but her great musical attainments could be turned to account in this way, and perhaps in no other.

Mary had considered herself fortunate, too, in having become associated with a family whose general behaviour towards her was respectful and kind. With this family, engaged in the instruction of two young ladies, she was in the habit of spending three hours every morning; and there was another family, living at a much greater distance, to whom she had recently engaged herself for two hours later in the day. To some the distance in this latter case would have been an objection, but Mary did not mind it much. Indeed, she thought it gave her health and spirits; and as she was a great walker, and had learned how to pass unprotected along the streets of London with the most perfect safety, she gladly accepted the liberal payment of this family, and went out cheerfully every day to her distant duties.

Lately, however, a great trial had crossed the path of the unprotected girl. The eldest brother of her pupils had returned home from his travels; and whether to beguile his own ennui, or whether that he was really struck with the interesting countenance of the poor governess, he had persecuted her with attentions which were neither agreeable to her taste, nor could be endured without some risk to that dignity of character which Mary justly valued as her greatest, indeed her only wealth. One of his methods of carrying on this plan of amusing himself was to watch and beset the governess in her walks, so that Mary was compelled to ride; and this was not conducive either to her health, or to the other purposes which she was bent upon pursuing.

For some time this annoyance had been carried on without remonstrance, for, as usual in such cases, it consisted of such attentions as implied a meaning without such meaning being expressed in words; and this rendered it difficult, and almost indelicate, in a modest girl to speak as if she understood. But Mary had spoken out clearly and decidedly, and as she could not appeal to her own mother from a fear of distressing her too much, she had made a friend of a lady, a near relative of the family, whom she often met at the house, and to whom she felt that she could with safety communicate her difficulties. This lady saw and perfectly understood the case—she saw what is but too true, and which might often be seen if we gave our attention to the subject, that a governess so situated cannot complain to the friends of the ungenerous offender without incurring the risk of having the blame turned wholly or in part upon herself. Mary Maitland, however, found a friend, who not only entered into her difficulties with all a mother's feelings, but without loss of time obtained for her the offer of another, and even a more lucrative situation, in a neighbourhood so distant as to afford a reasonable hope of safety.

Unfortunately for the governess, one condition was insisted upon in the new situation which she believed it impossible for her to meet. It was that this boy, to whom allusion has already been made, should be instructed in the art of drawing; and as his father was an architect of con-

siderable eminence, it was natural and reasonable that he should wish his son to be taught, and well taught too, in the line of occupation he was himself so successfully pursuing.

With all her advantages, and all her skill in music, it so happened that Mary had never given more than the slightest attention to the art of drawing. She had never seen its use, nor been made to understand its value. Like many young ladies, and old ones too, she had regarded the art as only an embellishment to life in what it could produce of ingenious or pretty; and as being, as a certain class of people are pleased to regard it, rather too mechanical for the fair fingers of a lady. Such at least had been the habit of those with whom Mary had been thrown into early association. Had it ever occurred to her that no human being can be so situated as not to find use for the art of drawing—not to find in it enlargement of mind, and consequent increase of happiness—had it occurred to her that what drawing produces in the hands of an ordinary performer, is the very least of its merits, but that, on the other hand, it has the power to open the eyes and make them see—to open them upon truth and beauty, and so to make the heart feel both—had it ever occurred to her that the art of drawing, even without actually *producing* anything which the world admires, may be so pursued as to lay the foundation of habits of observation, precision, correctness, taste—all that tends upwards from physical to moral beauty—Mary would have been one of the first to devote herself to the pursuit of this art with an assiduity and a perseverance which would have had no limits but that of her own capability.

Mary was now beginning to learn, what all who keep their minds open to the truth must learn at one time or other, that there is no attainment within the wide range of human capability which may not be rendered useful, in some degree, either to ourselves or others. Hence the value of learning every thing which falls within our reach to learn; and of considering that this universal knowledge, even while not the most profound, may be rendered eminently useful as an attendant upon those benevolent sym-

thies, which it is one of woman's highest privileges to exercise.

To condole with the sick or the sorrowful is a grateful and an amiable task; but to teach them how to amuse and interest themselves so as to fill up their vacant time, is a far more real and lasting kindness. To protect the poor and the persecuted is another virtue; but to show them how to render greater and better service to the rich, and thus to be more valuable to their employers, is one that will tell far more in the sum total of human happiness. To embellish a drawing-room, or to add beautiful objects to the boudoir of a friend, is a very delightful occupation; but to mingle ideas of beauty with the common affairs of life, and to instruct the ignorant in that valuable truth, that there is an intelligent as well as a delicate way of performing the most humble duty, and to make this instruction practical—to exemplify the thing taught by showing how it is done, this is, perhaps, a greater kindness—yes, and a greater embellishment too, in all its relations to human life, than ever was conferred by any single hand upon the most honoured or the dearest friend.

By an enlightened pursuit of the art of drawing in early life, much of this kind of benefit might be ensured. There is scarcely any occupation, however ordinary, which might not be better performed under the advantage of a correct eye, a clear perception of forms and distances, a precision of touch, and exactness of execution, to say nothing of order, grace, and beauty, in all which the art of drawing, if properly pursued, renders conversant. Happily for our country this truth is beginning to dawn upon the minds of thousands who looked upon drawing, until very recently, as being of no higher use than to adorn an album,—unless, indeed, where it was pursued as the occupation of a life. Happily, too, another old-fashioned idea is rapidly disappearing, that, to learn the art of drawing should be a privilege confined to the more affluent classes of society alone. More liberal views on this subject are now taking the place of this narrow prejudice; and we look with high expectation to the results which these views are calculated to ensure.



CHAPTER XII.

Her round of daily duties done,
Her scanty pittance bravely won,
With tender look of watchful care,
She waits beside her parent's chair.

THERE was something in Robert Clifton's look and manner, so calculated to inspire confidence; there was also in his conversation so entire an absence of all flattery, or personal compliment, that Miss Maitland found it quite as easy to transact business with him, as with her mother's banker. He was, as he said, almost an old man in care and in experience, and this premature gravity, and directness of manner, gave him the air of one who thinks intently upon the matter in hand, and upon nothing else.

Mary wished her mother had been present at the interview, and could have seen what a correct, as well as friendly kind of gentleman their lodger was. She felt sure there would have been no objection then to the proposal he had made of giving the young governess a few lessons in the art of drawing, as well as lending her a variety of subjects to practise upon by herself; but Mrs. Maitland did not know all; if she had, her anxieties for her daughter would have increased to

such a height, that she would in all probability have forbidden her to pursue an occupation which exposed her to annoyance of the kind from which she had lately suffered. The mother knew, of course, that a change was about to be made—Mary had told her so much; and she understood, also, that if her daughter could meet the wishes of the gentleman with whom she was now in treaty, her circumstances would be improved; but beyond this, she had not been made acquainted with her daughter's trials and perplexities. Indeed it was but seldom that Mary ventured to communicate with her mother, on subjects of this kind; when she did so, there followed such an outburst of feeling, not unfrequently of violent and bitter complaining about the hardness of their lot, and the injustice and cruelty of the treatment they had met with from the world, that in addition to all which she had really to bear, Mary felt these vain and fruitless lamentations of her mother's an insupportable calamity, as weakening to her better resolutions as they were agonising to her heart. In fact, her part in life, and the duty which she endeavoured to keep steadily before her,

was simply to make the best of things: for this she struggled; for this she prayed; and if sometimes she was entirely overcome by an accession of girlish or womanly weakness, she had her own room far distant from her mother's, where she could weep alone, and where also she recovered strength to meet the pressing duties of each day.

The feelings which Mary took with her into this solitary room, the looks, the attitude, the general deportment which her character involuntarily assumed when there, were not more different from those which she habitually resumed when having to descend and meet her mother, or to go out and mix with strangers—these were not more different than was the apartment itself from the well furnished, comfortable room which Mrs. Maitland occupied below.

"The fact is," said Mary, on the occasion of receiving her first lesson from Robert Clifton, and during her mother's accidental absence from the room, "the fact is, we are very poor, so poor, you would hardly believe; my mother knows this, and feels it bitterly; but I do not want her to be reminded of it by what she sees and feels immediately around her."

"Mrs. Maitland has a great deal of taste, I dare say," observed Robert.

"Oh! yes," said Mary "she likes to see beautiful things about her, and I am determined she shall have them while she can. So far as her own rooms extend, you see she is pretty comfortable; and happily, she never ascends the stairs so high as to reach my habitation, where I live like an owl, only that I want the picturesque embellishment of ivy round my tower."

"I have heard your hootings," said Robert, "but I thought them rather musical. It may be owing to my want of taste."

"Oh! look here, look here!" exclaimed Mary, whose castle was rapidly giving way on one side, "what a dreadful business I am making of this wall! And my time is so short, I must be gone in ten minutes. Do you really believe that I ever shall succeed?"

"I do," said Robert.

"Honestly?"

"Yes, honestly. But it will take a considerable time, and a good deal of patience too. How long were you in learning music?"

"Why I am learning still."

"So you will be with drawing."

"Ah! but to teach it,—that is the difficulty upon which I stumble. I am afraid it is dishonest—mean—nay, absolutely wrong—to attempt to teach what we do not understand."

"So it would be, unquestionably, if you ventured to go beyond your knowledge: but where can be the dishonesty of teaching others what you do know, though it may be but little."

"I hope there is no harm in the present case. For instance, I do know that the outline of this castle wall should be perfectly straight, and yet I have not made it so."

"Such difficulties you will conquer in a week."

"I have only three weeks beyond the present; no doubt there will be plenty of fresh difficulties for each."

"Yes, there will be the arch after the straight line. The arch is rather difficult; but you seem to have a very correct and discriminating eye, and that is half the matter."

"Ah! if I thought I really should succeed! You don't know how much I wish to take the situation which I have in prospect. It seems like a fortune to me; and yet, I dare say you would think it a very little fortune, so much do we measure our possessions by our wants."

All the while that Mary was talking, her fingers were very busily employed; and her mind, notwithstanding these intervals of cheerful chat, was still thrown into her employment with all the energy she was accustomed to bring to bear upon what she had to do.

Robert watched the long thin fingers of a hand which scarcely seemed as if it could belong to youth; and had it not been for the cheerful tones of the voice which spoke to him, the look of hope, the smile or pleased excitement, and all those indications which belong to the undertaking of a new project fraught with future good, Robert would have felt dispirited and sad at the contemplation of youth, and especially of woman's youth, consigned to a state of

such privation as to render a hope—so humble and so slender in itself—so rich in satisfaction. But so it often is; and thus mercifully has a kind Providence provided for us, that out of the very scantiness of our resources grows the comparative richness of our means.

So the lesson was ended. Mary laughed at her own beginning; but she did not quite despair. With the look of a happy child she showed it to her mother, begging her to try to admire it, and not to criticise its faults too much. Robert stood by, wondering at what he saw, and at the cheerful tones of the voice which had just been telling him of poverty, and trial, and of that poor little hope which he was endeavouring to strengthen into certainty. He stood by, wondering, and forgetting that his part in the matter was over with the folding up of the papers, and that he had nothing more to do than to go away.

But though Robert had been giving a lesson, he had also been receiving one; and so also a kind Providence not unfrequently arranges for us. He had been learning a lesson in self-government, and in the right appreciation of those natural gifts for which, but a few days before, he had secretly complained that he was not permitted to find a use. As if we *could* possess any gift upon which this impossibility need necessarily be stamped.

"And this young creature," said Robert to himself, as he watched the daughter, with one arm round her mother's neck, as she playfully pointed out the merits of her first performance, which she held in the other,—“this young creature can make herself happy upon such scraps and shreds as these! Well, I have more left than she has, at any rate. My means of enjoyment are rich in comparison with hers. Why should I murmur or despond, when she can rejoice so sincerely in this poor and pitiful hope?”

With Mary Maitland all was genuine. She would have been impulsive, and she might have been too ardent, had not circumstances schooled her into habits of calm and serious calculation; and especially, had she not been early initiated into that most valuable of all kinds of discipline, the necessity of caring for others even more than for herself. Hence the gravity with which she undertook any affairs of busi-

ness, even while she could enjoy, with all the buoyancy of a youthful mind, whatever was amusing or agreeable. In her character there was no morbid distaste for the pleasures of the present moment, none of that sickly sentimentality which so often turns away with diseased imagination to picture as most desirable the things which cannot be. And yet, with all the spring of mental life which fired her eye and animated her movements, there was the tall and slender form, the gentle bending figure, and all the other indications of feminine delicacy, requiring, and demanding, under happier circumstances, the tenderest care.

Yet this gentle creature, so young too, had to walk the streets of London alone in all kinds of weather, braving alike the winter's storm and summer's heat. This gentle creature, so young too, had to go out early, often faint and languid, to return late, more often weary and exhausted, having laboured both with hand and head, yes, and with heart too, incessantly during the intervening time. This gentle creature, so pressed with hard necessity—so overwrought in all her youthful faculties (scarcely as yet mature), had had to suffer that worst of woman's trials—to be the sport of man's inherent selfishness—and to have to feel that her character, her only earthly possession, and consequently a vast possession to her, could at any time be injured, if not wholly sacrificed for his amusement, and that without leaving her the common right and power of self-defence.

Mary Maitland had had to feel all this, and her spirit was naturally keenly alive to everything which could even remotely touch the purity and delicacy of her character; but her feelings were not embittered even by this humiliating passage in her young life. She rather thanked God, who had given her so early the ability and the strength which were necessary for taking care of herself. She had felt the circumstances of her late experience very painfully at times. She had acutely felt the want of a father and protector, to whom she might appeal. She had felt a thousand agonising sensations in connection with her own lonely and isolated position; but they were for the most part confined to her own solitary apartment, where they sometimes found vent in a passionate burst of tears, so suddenly indulged, and so quickly

wiped away, as scarcely to leave any perceptible trace upon the calm, pale cheek over which they were not long permitted to flow.

From the time of his first discovery of the real situation of this industrious and energetic girl, Robert Clifton became more cheerful, and looked more patiently upon his own position in the world. Along with this added cheerfulness, he thought more charitably of his brother and of all mankind.

Philip had promised well, and what was better still, he had told the whole truth. Happy was it for him, and happy for all the family, that he had formed an attachment which was in all respects so calculated to strengthen his better resolutions, and to excite in him a taste for higher and purer enjoyments. Philip had promised well; but perhaps he had been a little too ready to pledge himself by solemn oaths to reveal to his brother everything connected with his future life. Already, indeed, a long letter had been written by him for his brother's inspection, so circumstantial and minute in its details, that Robert, under any other circumstances, would have smiled at its boyish simplicity. Such details, he thought, were not very likely to be kept up, and he would have felt more confidence in the continuance of this kind of intercourse had it been less particular and minute.

On the other hand, the fears which had so crowded upon Robert Clifton's mind as to plunge him at first into a state of the lowest depression, had not entirely disappeared. The same anxiety for his brother still hung about him, and it was the more painful because of a stern determination to which he still held—and he told his brother that he did so—a determination that if Philip fell again into his former habits, and fell again with all the inducements which he now enjoyed for becoming a better and a wiser man, Miss Linden should not be allowed to enter blindly into a connection so fraught with ruin and misery. Robert himself would feel it his duty to lay open the truth, so that both the young lady and her father should know that they had been honestly dealt with, in being made fully aware of the grounds on which they had to calculate for the future.

Whenever the subject presented itself

under this aspect to Robert Clifton's consideration, he became more than usually grave and thoughtful. Indeed, a sudden pang shot through his heart at times, so sharp as to induce him to question whether any duty could really require of him the performance of so odious a task. But then again he persuaded himself that the task would never have to be performed: and thus all seemed to go on well again. Another long letter came from Philip. The evidence in his favour strengthened, and Robert took fresh courage for the future.

All this while, Robert Clifton was suffering physically, as thousands are suffering besides him; and hence a host of apprehensions thronged upon him, growing, as it were, spontaneously out of every subject connected with himself, and with those in whose welfare his happiness was bound up. A journey, a voyage, a ramble amidst mountain scenery, but especially an occupation congenial to his nature, would have enabled him to throw off half these anxieties, and to bear the other half more lightly. Deprived of these natural and wholesome restoratives to mental health, he was still not left without his consolation. Heaven kindly sent him, as already stated, a gentle but unconscious monitor in the young girl, who now became dependent upon him for almost daily lessons in the art to which she so perseveringly, and now so hopefully, applied herself.

Easily won over by the respectful attentions of Robert Clifton, Mrs. Maitland had yielded her consent to his proposal of being her daughter's regular instructor in the art of drawing. And though at first, as a question of etiquette, the mother made a point of being present at these lessons, she soon learned to trust the grave, thoughtful young man, to teach her daughter during those early hours of the day when it would have been too great a sacrifice for her to have risen for the purpose of keeping watch over any one.

Robert and his pupil were similarly circumstanced in this respect. Neither had a moment of time to call their own, except early in the morning and late at night. Immediately after a seven o'clock breakfast, then, the lesson began; and after her return home in the evening, Mary practised upon what she had learned.

"And you were really," said she, one day to her instructor, "you were really going to destroy these beautiful drawings!"

"More than that," said Robert, "I was very near making a vow that I would never touch a pencil again."

"How strange!" said Mary.

"Why so?"

"Strange that an art, which I fancy would make me quite happy if I possessed it, should be cast aside by you as utterly worthless!"

"And yet it may be so; for what should I do with your music, for instance?"

"Oh! gladden your own soul with it, to be sure, as I do. Do you never feel hungry after something which the dry details of life do not afford?"

"Yes, but I never thought that music could satisfy that hunger."

"Perhaps not in itself; nor would drawing satisfy me. But there is so much to be done with both—with everything, in short, which we can do. Why, only think! Your drawing, in its veriest shreds and fragments, in its waste and refuse, has been the means of helping me to a situation, without which I must have begged, or rather borrowed, which I take to be much worse. Your drawing has been the means of opening to me—not only a new resource for living, but a new life. You cannot think how rich I feel in my new possession. Look here! Whoever would have thought that in one short month I should have made a picture like this? Nay, do not laugh. My sheep are all pigs, to be sure; and my distant objects come forward, and stand before the near. But what of that? I see why they do so, and therefore I shall manage better in time. And then there is such infinite amusement in creating, shaping, and adjusting one's objects, for ever. Oh! never again, as long as you live—never again regret that God gave you this gift, nor throw it aside as worthless."

"I do not think I ever shall."

"But you speak coldly."

"Do I speak coldly?"

"Yes; and I want you to know and feel all the great happiness which you have been the means of bestowing upon me—by your skill in drawing, I mean, of course."

"Oh! I perfectly understand that."

"You ought first to understand a little

of the distress in which this new happiness found me. But hush! I must not let my mother hear me speak of distress. Do you know, I had risen with the sun, morning after morning, to try what I could do. I had taken a small, delicate engraving, and endeavoured to copy that. Oh! you never saw such miserable work as I made of it—so miserable, that it cost me many bitter tears; and yet I had a very urgent reason for wishing to accomplish the end which you have placed within my reach. It is indeed kind of you to take such pains with a poor helpless girl like me; but if you knew what that reason of mine was, I don't think you would regret your kindness. Oh! Mr. Clifton, all men are not like you!"

"I hope not. I hope there are many better men in the world than I am."

"Ah! but there are many worse men, too,—selfish men there are, unprincipled men, who take advantage of poverty, and weakness, and want of friends. But I don't want to think or speak on subjects of this kind. It makes me think less than I ought of the pleasures and advantages which I enjoy, and less of the goodness of God, and his power to preserve and keep us amidst all dangers."

"There are others beside yourself, who need to forget the galling and humiliating cares of life, in order that they may remember God, and thank him more continually for his goodness."

"Is it possible, Mr. Clifton, that you are tempted in this way, to remember what can do you no good to think of, and to forget what would cheer and comfort you under every trial?"

"Indeed there is, no one more troubled in this way than myself. I might almost say no one more guilty."

"You have your cares and trials then, as well as myself?"

"Indeed I have. I sometimes fancy rather more than my proper share of them."

"But you are not poor, like me."

"There are degrees of poverty. I am the oldest of my family, and I have many to provide and care for."

"Out of some great business, is it—some business that does not always go on well?"

"You have exactly guessed the case."

"That must be very harassing. I wish I could help you as you have been helping me."

"You have helped me, already."

"How is that possible? I have done nothing for you."

"Yes, you have. You have done, and you are still doing me a great service."

"What can you mean?"

"I mean that you are teaching me a most useful lesson,—one—that I hope I never shall forget."

"I am more puzzled than ever. Do tell me what you mean?"

"I mean that you have taught me to look more patiently upon the troubles and vexations which beset my path, to refer them more to God, and so to find them often converted into blessings."

"Have I—have I indeed? Then I *have* done you a service, though quite unconsciously, and without merit on my part."

"Yes, you have made me wiser than I was, and far happier. I dare not say better. Let us hope that will come in time?"

"Oh! it is sure to come, when we are made happier by thinking about God, and his dealings with us. At least I think I find it so. If, indeed, I may speak of being better at all. I suppose you only mean better as I do—better in being more patient and kind, more charitable towards every one, and more ready to help—more at peace with one's own heart, and more thankful to God."

"That is precisely what I mean, and it is in that way that I think you have made me better."

"Oh! I am so glad! Only think! a poor hardworking girl like me to do you good! And yet I believe such things are possible. I hope you believe in a kind Providence watching over us, and turning and winding the thread of our lives just so as to make the greatest amount of good come out of everything. I hope you believe that?"

"I hope I do."

"I know there are people who think that everything in this world is managed by a set of rules, fixed, like the laws of nature from the foundation of the world. I suppose it is so with matter, but with spirit there is surely some different provision, or why are we told to pray? How,

in fact, are we to read and interpret the Scriptures? But we won't discuss this now. Already I am talking too much, and too boldly; only I want you to look with me into what I fancy is the inner working of all that we have to do with in the common affairs of life."

"Yes, if we could rightly see this inner working, what different creatures we should be. But you know it is the very essence of that faith by which we are to be saved, that we should believe where we cannot see, and trust where we are unable to understand."

"I know it is so, and that on the most essential points. But still, for a poor, helpless creature like me, and there must be many like me—many even much more helpless—for such an one to think as I do sometimes, that I can really see the finger of God in what happens to me, is such inexpressible satisfaction. People talk about recognising the Divine Majesty in all that is terrific, appalling, or destructive; and they bow themselves before the storm, the volcano, and even the pestilence. People who have never prayed before, will kneel and cry to heaven when their worldly hopes are crushed by some great and overwhelming calamity; and when they have lost all, they say that God has done it. How much happier it is then, and, certainly, it is equally reasonable, to suppose that any little change or turn in our affairs, which either alleviates suffering, awakens hope, or rescues from impending danger, is, also, the work of God, and brought about by his immediate instrumentality. What, for instance, would a poor creature like myself do in this great city of London, walking alone and unprotected, if I did not feel as if the eye of a kind Father was upon me all the day. I have no other father, you know, no brother, no friend but my mother, and her I have to care for as if she was my child."

"God grant you may always have this feeling, and that it may become stronger and deeper with you every day that you live. To you it can never be productive of anything but good."

"Can it to any one?"

"I believe there are persons of a peculiar tendency of mind—selfish, isolated mystics, who have lived too much in this element of thought, wrapped up entirely

in the contemplation of God's dealings with and for themselves, to the exclusion of those larger, wider, loftier, and more benevolent views which an enlightened study of the Holy Scriptures is calculated to inspire."

"I should be sorry indeed to fall into this selfish way of thinking. It would be very shocking—very unlike the kind of Christianity which the Saviour came to teach—very unworthy of the salvation which he purchased for us."

"Like many other points of Christian duty and experience, these views of the character and attributes of God, and of his dealings with his creatures, may be just and true in themselves, and even essential to the great work which has to be transacted between the soul and its Maker; but yet, taken singly, and dwelt upon exclusively, they may, as I have said, be fraught with danger, though possibly not so to you."

"I hope not."

"I hope not, and I believe not."

"It is so pleasant, so consoling, to gather into a lonely heart like mine, all that I can lay hold of from such thoughts as these."

"Yes, gather them, and hoard them as your richest treasure. Next to the words of inspiration, they are so to you, and to thousands."

"What else, as I said before, is there for me of comfort or support in the life I am leading? What else, as I pace the streets of this great city, and see its wickedness and its shame. Oh! sir, I know a great deal more about the wickedness of the world than girls of my age generally know. I am sometimes even able to render a little help, though it must, you know, be in a very small way. Often I have called the attention of the police to what they would scarcely have seen themselves, as in the case of our poor servant, whose history I think you know. Once, too, and that was a memorable time, I found a lost child—only think, a poor child utterly lost in London! A wicked nurse, I believe, had forgotten it, or at all events, had left it to the mercy of strangers, and it was just on the point of being claimed by a woman who had no right to it. But I stuck to it the child was not hers, and by my perseverance, the poor

little thing was at last restored to its own mother. Oh! sir, London is a very wicked place."

"Too wicked, I am afraid, for either you or me to reclaim it."

"No doubt it is; but we can each of us do something."

"How long have you gone out in this unprotected manner?"

"For three years and a half, and I am not yet one-and-twenty. At first I was very much afraid, particularly when rude men spoke to me, as they did sometimes then—now they never do; in order to keep my heart from quite sinking, I made a little prayer, and to this day the words of that simple prayer are a great comfort to me. I used to wish that I could close my eyes, and so walk blindfold through all that I did not want to see. Now I wish rather to relieve the suffering, than not to see it; and I think, sometimes, if I were one of those rich ladies rolling in their carriages, with their footmen and fat spaniels, what I would do!"

"I wonder what you would do?"

"I think I would first endow an institution in which wicked men should be confined, and kept from ruining their families as well as themselves."

"Ah! my good philanthropist, I am not quite sure that your little prayer would not really do more good than all your schemes for the correction of bad men, or the improvement of the human race in general."

"One thing I know—my little prayer is far more likely to be breathed, than my fine schemes to be executed. But, how I am talking and taking up your time! Pray forgive me."

"I have not to forgive, but to thank you, and I do so with all my heart; I have no one else to exchange a word with on subjects of this kind."

"Nor I; for if I should begin to speak to my poor suffering mother about the comfort or the necessity of prayer, she would either think I was going to die, or that I must be very miserable indeed to feel the want of such support; and then she would bemoan her luckless fate again, until I should bitterly repent of having spoken."

"Speak to me then as often as you like in this way. It will do me good without doing you harm."

"There is only one kind of harm it can do me."

"What is that?"

"You will soon become tired of these lodgings, or duty may perhaps call you away, and then I shall feel as if I had lost something which perhaps I had no right to possess."

"It will not be much that you can lose in me."

"Yes, it will be a great deal for me situated as I am; for it will be a friend. Is not that much?"

"A true friend is."

"And you, I am sure, are true."

"I hope so."

"Perhaps I went too far in speaking of you as *my* friend. It was only in idea, mind. I beg your pardon, but indeed I only said that I should feel as if I had lost a friend."

"You may spare your *if* with its marked emphasis. I should like very much to be your friend, and if you will let me be so, I shall only esteem it too great an honour."

"Oh! don't talk to me in that manner. Don't say anything about honour in connection with me. I know very well how a daily governess is looked upon by men of the world."

"But I am not a man of the world."

"I hope not; and I hope you believe me when I say that if I had thought you were, I never—never—would have talked to you as I have done."

"Let us meet then, whenever we do meet, with a perfect understanding."

"I know what you mean—an understanding that we are each to do the other good, not harm. But why do you smile?"

"At the idea of anyone doing harm to you."

"Oh Mr. Clifton, you don't know—but I will not speak on such subjects. *That* at all events does me harm."

"No. We will speak of what brings hope, and strength, and confidence for the future. This I fancy is what we are both needing. I am sure I am."

"But you must not look in that way when you speak of the future. And now that I think of it, I am sure you have not been well lately. My mother thinks, and Jane thinks, too, that you are looking pale, and thinner, and they say you eat nothing."

"If they had added that I have almost

lost the power to sleep, they would not have been far wrong, and yet I do not feel ill."

"Shall I tell you what you want?"

"Yes, do."

"For your body, you want a good long ramble in the country."

"And for my mind?"

"Ah! it is not for me to minister to a mind diseased. One half at least of what your mind is wanting would come back with your improved bodily health."

"And the other half?"

"Would be much improved by dwelling on the bright side of things, instead of the dark side only."

"But there are some things which have no bright side."

"There I differ from you. I do not believe there is any human lot that has in it nothing pleasant, except only the lot of the wicked. It is right, you know, that guilt should make all dark around us. We ought to rejoice rather than murmur at that?"

"But I speak of situations where there is no positive guilt, or guilt only of some other persons—for instance, situations such as yours or mine."

"Oh! do not speak of yours and mine in that dark way. I implore you not to make me see my own situation so."

"But unless I may sometimes speak to you out of my shadow, how am I ever to get you to turn me about so that I may bask in your light?"

"This will never do. Time is flying. I shall be too late. Never mind, I will ride to-day. You must listen to me this once. Suppose now I admit so much as that I was very miserable, and that I had even a right to be miserable on the morning when I came to the conclusion that I really could not draw—that it was of no use making the attempt, and that consequently I must give up the hope on which my heart was set. Well; my foolish tears attracted your attention—your scattered drawings attracted mine. My tears were the result of misery—your half-destroyed drawings were the same. Now, look at the issue—I have found, through this means, a kind tutor willing to instruct me in the art of drawing."

"And I?"

"Good morning. I hear a carriage at the door."



CHAPTER XIII.

Stately and tall she moves and looks a queen,
 One arm around her weaker sister thrown,
 Whose arms embrace her, as the ivy green
 Close to the vigorous elm hath crept and grown.

A sudden but powerful stimulus, such as the tidings brought by his brother, was all that Seymour Clifton wanted to rouse him into action. He felt then, that in one way or another, he must act; and with manly determination he chose the right way, and pursued it. In a week from that time he was gone—gone to bear what burden he might, alone. Behind him, at least within the circle of his home, there remained a great calm. No one could speak in the presence of Mr. Clifton on the subject of their anxious care, and yet none could throw off the seriousness which this anxiety naturally imparted to their looks and manners.

Mr. Clifton thought it was the loss of their brother's society which made his daughters so silent and depressed; and he very reasonably begged them to be cheerful for his sake. He remonstrated with his wife, too, for her frequent fretting about Seymour, who, he said, was doing well, and must do well: invalids sometimes

believe in everybody doing well except themselves. And thus it was, to some extent, with poor Mr. Clifton. Like a spoilt child, he had become so generally the object of kind solicitude and attention, he had been so little called upon to think or feel for others, that the habit grew upon him of considering himself the one being in the universe, and his own sufferings the concentrated misery of the whole world. Pitiful—most pitiful indeed, is illness where this consequence ensues; and where the sympathies of the heart, instead of being expanded, are drawn in, as it were, and locked within one narrow region of weakness or pain, there to contract, to starve, and wither, because fed only upon the meagre aliment which self supplies.

Miss Clifton, while she remained, was the only person in the household who seemed capable of making any continued effort to be cheerful. When she was gone, the general gloom increased. Helen and her sister walked much together, conversing frequently in under tones of great earnestness, as if their father's affairs had rested entirely upon their shoulders.

Like most other girls so circumstanced

—indeed like most women, they had innumerable expedients for relieving the difficulties of their family. They had innumerable sacrifices which they intended making, some of them about as remote from the case in point as if it had been one of sudden riches instead of poverty. Upon the whole, however, they interested themselves excessively in their own plans and suggestions; so much so, that a stranger observing them sometimes when they walked and talked together, would almost have supposed the theme to be one of pleasurable excitement.

On one bright morning especially, with their arms round each other, they walked backwards and forwards on the terrace which ran along the front of the house, waiting there by preference, in order to catch the first summons to breakfast. The season was verging on towards autumn now, but the weather was still so mild that the sisters sunned themselves in the morning light without either bonnet or shawl. Helen looked very queenly and beautiful as she walked with stately step, her noble head sometimes thrown back with the air of one who sets some paltry trial at defiance; while Catherine clung to her as to a pillar of strength, sometimes as by a sudden bound escaping from her own difficulty, and then compelled to look up into her sister's face, and ask support again.

In fact, the case was very different as it affected the two sisters. Catherine understood how it was so, and felt the difference clearly; but upon this she made no comment, fearing to depreciate the worth of Helen's magnanimity. Still, if the sisters had changed places, there would have been the same majestic look and manner about Helen, while with Catherine there would have been a secret spring of joy, that scarcely could have been kept from beaming out of her eyes, or bursting forth in smiles, under any calamity, however grievous, which left this spring untouched.

The scheme of Catherine's life, as projected by her mother, now looked alarmingly near its fulfilment; and although Helen declared again and again that *she* should not mind it at all, and spoke even as if the necessity which brought her to that would be hailed as a cause of rejoicing rather than distress, Catherine grew very sick whenever the subject was directly

alluded to, and thought she should depend more implicitly upon her sister's opinion on other subjects, if she would only speak more to the purpose on that.

"I still hope," said Catherine, "that some other chance will be found for me to make my own way in the world."

"But you know," said Helen, "there is none so respectable—none which calls for the exercise of mind to so great an extent—none, in short, which requires so good an education to commence with; and therefore it is that a lady suffers no degradation in this."

"Suffers no degradation!" said Catherine, in a tone of the utmost astonishment. "What can you mean? Why, they tell me that governesses are frequently paid at a rate much lower than cooks."

"Oh! I don't mean in money matters, exactly. I believe they are badly paid; and what is worse, paid grudgingly, too: but I mean—that the occupation itself is respectable, even dignified, and in that I should satisfy myself."

"What? if you were treated with contempt and scorn?"

"I don't think I should be so treated."

"I am quite sure I should."

"Not if you kept to your own business, and rightly discharged your duty in that."

"That is precisely what you might do, Helen, but what I never shall. I am not cut out for that sort of thing."

"And yet you are fond of children."

"Of little babies, I am indeed; but great boys and girls growing into men and women are quite different. I should always think they were looking into my face to tell me how ugly I was, and watching me in all I did to detect my mistakes, and triumph over my ignorance. Oh! I would rather a thousand times be a common nurse!"

"Kitty, I sometimes wish I could just take your place."

"You do?"

"Seriously, I do."

"Impossible! Why you have such a happy lot before you!"

"Oh! yes, very happy; and I know I ought to be very thankful. Indeed, I am thankful when I think how soon I shall be out of the way of troubling any one—poor Robert in particular; and yet I should very much like to be helping the family, as

you will, Kitty. I wonder whether Henry will like my doing all that I intend to do."

"That reminds me, Helen, of something I have been wanting to say to you—something I learned from aunt Ann; and you know she is very wise about all such matters."

"Pray tell me what it is, for I attach great importance to her opinions?"

"Well, we were talking one day about you and Henry, and saying how generous you were, and she said she hoped you would never be too generous with your husband's money, especially to your own family—that it was bad policy in any woman to be so, especially if she had no fortune when she married."

"Did aunt Ann really say so?"

"Yes, indeed she did."

"Then I almost wish I was not going to be married at all."

"Oh, Helen!"

"It would be so very shocking, Kitty, to be living in luxury oneself, and not able to do a great deal, and to do it without question or demur, for one's own family."

"I don't think, from what aunt Ann said, that married women ever can do as they wish. To be sure, she is only an old maid herself."

"But she knows a great deal about married life, for all that. She is so sympathising; and people cultivate her intimacy so much, that I dare say she knows more than many married women do. I think, however, there is one weakness that I have discovered even in her."

"Pray what is that?"

"She leans always a little to the stronger side; she seems to me to take almost always the part of men, where women are concerned."

"And don't you think we should do so? Are not men the natural lords of creation, and should we not honour them as such?"

"To a certain extent, undoubtedly we should. But when a woman has a sound mind, strong principles, and clear views, I cannot see by what right she is bound to give up the exercise of these Divine gifts in order to submit the more gracefully to caprice or selfishness."

"Oh, Helen! Do you think you are a fit person to be married?"

"I am afraid sometimes that I am not. You, Kitty, would make a much better wife."

"I should never talk about my sound mind, strong principles, and clear views, I believe, because I am not sure that I have any."

"How would you act, then, if you felt quite sure it was right to do a kind and generous act, and your husband was unwilling that you should do it?"

"I would coax him into doing it himself, to be sure; and then he would have all the credit; and, being pleased with himself, he would be pleased with me too."

"I am afraid, Kitty, this coaxing system will never do for me."

"Then I don't think marriage will do very well for you, Helen."

"Perhaps not. Perhaps I shall never be married, Kitty, even yet."

"What makes you say so, Helen? You quite frighten me."

"Oh! don't be alarmed. I suppose such things are common enough; but Henry and I have had one grand quarrel already."

"You do frighten me though, Helen. What can you mean?"

"I mean what I say."

"And you speak so calmly, as if such a quarrel was nothing. Why I should die, Helen, if such a thing happened to me; or, at all events, I should be utterly inconsolable until it was made up. Even then, I should feel as if my ship had struck against a rock, and would never be quite so safe again. Oh! Helen, how is it? Pray tell me that all is right again."

"Perfectly right, I assure you. It was a mere trifle."

"But what was it?"

"Why, if you must know, I will tell you. You remember those bracelets which Henry brought me from Paris?"

"Yes, indeed I do."

"Well, I wanted to sell them, and appropriate the money to a different purpose."

"Helen!"

"Yes; and I call it quite a simple case, though you do look almost as much astonished, and quite as indignant, as Henry did himself."

"I cannot understand you."

"I will explain myself further. The bracelets are of no value to me. I don't think I shall ever—"

"What did you say, Helen? I don't think I heard you. The bracelets?"

"Are not things I care about at all."

"Not in themselves, you mean."

"Not in any way, so much as I care for adding something to the comfort of my father and mother when I leave them. The money which these bracelets cost would go a long way in their small establishment; and you know it must soon be very small indeed."

"Dear Helen, is it possible that you are in earnest?"

"Yes, in sad earnest."

"Then what is to become of poor Henry?"

"I don't know what *you* mean now."

"I mean, Helen, that you are not fit to be a wife—that you can never make him happy, good as you are, unless you feel differently about these little things."

"It is because they are so little, that I bestow no feeling upon them. I feel for my father, and mother, and for all of you."

"And for Henry?"

"Oh! of course."

"I cannot understand you, with that cold 'of course.'"

"I am afraid Henry does not understand me, either; there are so many subjects on which we do not think alike; and I find it so very difficult to bring him over to my views."

"Or to induce him not to act upon his own?"

"Exactly: that is perhaps the worst part of his character. He is so impetuous, so wilful, and will not listen to reason. For instance—just now, when we are all in such trouble, he wants me to meet him for the purpose of choosing carpets, fringes, all sorts of foolish things."

"But he must know that you could not meet him for such a purpose—at least not alone?"

"Not alone, certainly. ~~He~~ ^{She} had made a plan, which he considered very excellent, for inveigling aunt Ann into the scheme; and she, good creature that she is, appears quite willing, falls in with his views, and has written to me endeavouring to persuade me to join them in London."

"And you will go, of course, Helen?"

"Indeed I have no such intention."

"Why not?"

"Simply because of this great trouble. I could not feel the slightest pleasure now in assisting to arrange the most beautiful home for myself, while my parents may at

any time be reduced to the necessity of leaving this."

"But why look upon the home as for yourself, Helen, and upon everything as done to please *you*?"

"Henry always speaks of what he does, and of all he has, in that manner."

"Dear Helen, what a child you are in these matters; I must really instruct you myself. Don't you see this is only the language of courtship, and a very foolish as well as false language it is. If Henry pretends it is all for you, you must pretend it is all for him; and so, by this pretty kind of pretence on both sides, all will be right and fair in the end. But, dear Helen, I must really give you another little lesson beyond this, and a more serious one, too. Would it not be happier for yourself, and better for both, if you would just get into the habit of thinking that all you do is for him? You are so generous, Helen, and so kind, I am sure this feeling would help you to do everything that he would like, though you might not particularly like it for yourself. Now you *will* go to London, won't you? I am sure a visit to aunt Ann would do you a world of good; and you would see Henry so often there."

"Not now, Kitty. You must not ask me to do so now."

"But now is the only time that Henry wants you. Now is the time to put away your own grief for his sake, and to enter into his joy."

"I could do this better, if his joy was not so great."

"And are you the person to complain of that, Helen?"

"It seems hard, when we are all overwhelmed with sorrow, to see him wild about the papering of a wall."

"Not at all. You judge him with hardness there; for in the first place, you know we are forbidden to tell to any one, even to him, the state of our affairs at present."

"I know. But when I told him I was in trouble, as I did in my last letter, he only begged me not to cry away all the bloom from my cheeks; and then went on as gaily as ever, about some patterns from the upholsterer."

"It is only his way, Helen—his natural flippant way. It means nothing, and you should not find fault with it now, as you knew all this from the first."

"I don't wish to find fault, only you must not urge me to go from home just now. I could not go, indeed, dear Kitty; or if I did, I should be quite unable to take an interest in anything, and that would be worse. Suppose you go instead of me, Kitty. I wish you would."

"Do you really, Helen?"

"I do, indeed."

"And would you let me go about with Henry, helping him to fit up his beautiful house?"

"Most gladly, under present circumstances."

"I wonder whether aunt Ann would think it quite proper. For myself, I should like it exceedingly. Only, what would Henry say?"

"He might not like it so well at first; but you would soon coax him into good-humour, and in the end he would be happier, and better pleased. I have no doubt as regards taste you might be a little at fault."

"Oh, I know all about that. I should give up everything to him. I know I should be charmed with his choice, unless in some extreme case; and so, you know, we should have no dispute." He would make the selections, and I should just respond and approve. I really do think, all joking apart, Helen, that I should like very much to go."

"And I really do think that I should like you to go."

"Well, write and ask Henry what he thinks—for you know I cannot force myself upon him; and in the mean time I will try to bring mamma over to our plan. If you say that you really cannot leave her, I am sure she will take it very kindly, and feel very grateful to you, and so she will be the more willing to spare a little restless being like myself, who cannot always manage her so well as you can, with your quiet, sober ways."

The little plan upon which the sisters thus held consultation did not appear so unreasonable to Mrs. Clifton as they had feared it might. Her own partialities leaned very obviously towards her daughter Helen, as being at once more sedate and judicious; while, on the other hand, there was an air and look about Helen Clifton well calculated to confer honour upon the family to which she belonged. Mrs. Clifton was by no means insensible to this

fact. She held, in the secret of her heart, a long-cherished pride in this beautiful and sedate girl, and though seldom receiving from her those expressions of tenderness which, under strong excitement, were apt to escape from the younger sister, Mrs. Clifton felt no less sure of the deep and faithful affection which remained comparatively hidden under Helen's calmer and colder habits.

Only for those great hopes which the mother had early cherished in connection with this daughter, she would have rejoiced in keeping her always near. But having been accustomed to look upon Helen as one who could not, and ought not, to be detained within the home circle, the near prospect of her departure had the fewer regrets; at the same time that it made the lovely being about to be so soon lost to her parents more lovely, and more precious in herself. Thus, though a little surprised at first, Mrs. Clifton, as already stated, was not difficult to win over to her daughter's plans, more especially as she felt secretly flattered—perhaps more than flattered, that Helen, with such prospects of enjoyment before her, should really prefer remaining a while longer in a home where there was but little cheerfulness to be enjoyed, and where the amusement must be all of her own creating.

With Henry Linden the case was more difficult. At first he positively refused his consent to the exchange of sisters being made, setting aside all considerations of civility towards the younger; then he remonstrated, then he quarrelled, then he made peace,—and so the matter ended; for somebody he must have, he said, of woman kind, if only to find fault with, and throw the blame upon when things went wrong; and as his own sister was too delicate and too precious to be spared for such a purpose, he concluded with a promise to make himself as well satisfied as he could with poor Kitty, and at all events to be civil to her for her sister's sake. Aunt Ann might have done very well, he said, only that she was neither to be abused nor quarrelled with. Besides which, he wanted somebody younger, and more elastic in their spirits. Perhaps he should do very well with little Kitty, after all.

With this and similar expressions his

letter concluded; and the sisters knew him well enough to understand perfectly that he was not altogether averse to the proposal. So Kitty, in due time, made herself ready, and set out for London; half-pleased with her errand as regarded herself, yet still rather anxious and troubled on her sister's account, that she should have evinced so little enthusiasm, scarcely even common interest, in what seemed just now to be filling the whole mind of her lover.

To her aunt, but to no other person, did Catherine venture to communicate these anxieties. Her aunt looked alarmed—troubled—almost distressed. "This will never do," she said. "Helen is a devoted and affectionate daughter, but she must never marry until she has learned to make the claims of a husband her first consideration. This will never do."

"You are so grave about the matter," said Catherine, smiling.

"It is a matter to be grave about," said her Aunt.

"Oh! it will all come right, when they are married," said the niece.

"Catherine," said her aunt, still very gravely, "does everything come right after people are married?"

"I suppose so," replied Catherine; "or why do people make such strange, unaccountable matches?"

"Because," said the older lady, "they have the same absurd notion which you have just now expressed, that all will come right afterwards, that sympathy will be created by the clashing together of opposite opinions, and that harmony will arise out of the blending of discordant elements."

"But, affection, dear Aunt," said Catherine; "you make no allowance for what affection can do. You know it is love which makes everything go so smoothly and so well."

"Ah! that poor love!" said the older lady, "what miracles we ask of it. But, Catherine, we must think what can be done here—what we can do to supply Helen's place. There are two of us, at all events."

"Yes," said Catherine, "we must make ourselves very agreeable, and very busy, and be very much delighted with everything."

"I don't think," said the Aunt, "we shall find any difficulty in that respect. Henry has excellent taste, and he is sparing neither expense nor trouble to make Helen's future home everything we could desire for her. I only wish the dear girl herself would have come, and then, as you say, all would have been right. I believe it was a bitter disappointment to Henry at first; but he is very amiable. Don't you think him very amiable, Catherine?"

"I used to think him so," Catherine replied. But she quickly changed the subject; and indeed was obliged to change it, for Henry himself arrived; and without any allusion being made to the cause of his recent disappointment, he entered with great volubility and interest upon a variety of plans connected with the arrangement of his domestic affairs, in all which it was evident to the ladies that while their advice was asked, their approbation only was desired. Of course they both approved with all their might, and the young gentleman appeared exceedingly well satisfied with their opinions.

On the very day of Catherine's arrival in town he wanted her to go with him to his house, and she was preparing to do so in the most good-natured manner, when Miss Clifton suggested that daylight would be an advantage; and thus the project was given up until the following day.

Early the next morning Henry was at the door with a carriage ready to convey the two ladies to his house. It was something like a triumphal entry when he ushered them in; although, to tell the truth, there were painters' pots and brushes still standing in the hall, and many other objects of discomfort and disorder, indicating a greater hastening on in some departments than others were quite prepared to sustain.

The aunt and the niece, however, said nothing about this, but stepped lightly over the matting, or glided sideways past the painted banisters, edging about as best they could, wherever their enthusiastic conductor might choose to lead them, at the imminent peril of their own drapery; but they faithfully performed their whole duty, without the slightest hesitation or apparent difficulty as regarded themselves. Indeed, with the younger lady there really was

none,—for besides being a little careless about such matters in general, she felt a warm, and a very real enthusiasm, about all that Henry was busied in doing, which carried her completely out of her own life into his, and delighted him just in proportion as her own delight was ardent and sincere.

All was so charmingly new to Catherine, too, shut up as she had been in her quiet home, and almost excluded from the accustomed interchange of visiting on her father's account—all was so new and so beautiful, that she could express her admiration in words of unbounded praise, and yet speak with her heart upon her lips. Henry Linden looked at her often as he responded to these expressions, and he began to think she was not so plain as he had once imagined her to be.

Indeed, what face is there so plain that it cannot be made beautiful by expression, at all events when such plainness consists not in any natural deformity? Far, indeed, was the countenance of Catherine Clifton from this. Her features were small, and neither irregular nor in any respect repulsive. The constant variety and play of expression of which they were capable, rendered her face amusing and attractive, rather than disagreeable; and consequently many eyes turned observantly to Catherine, but it was less in the way of admiration than for the purpose of improving an acquaintance which promised to be agreeable. Still there was something that effectually shut out all pretensions to beauty; and, if it must be told, perhaps it was this. Her eyes, her hair, and her complexion were very nearly of the same colour. Dress as she would, nothing could be made of them, as to effect. Colours were of no value where there was nothing to contrast, or to harmonise with. Consequently nobody thought twice about Catherine Clifton until they had conversed with her, and seen the lighting up of her pale gray eyes, and the smile that played about a mouth which was capable of every expression, from the arch drollery of natural and simple humour, to the deeper pathos of the tenderest sympathy with suffering.

Indeed, it was this quick and ever ready sympathy with others which made Catherine Clifton almost always delightful to those

who loved her. In their mirthful moods no one could share more heartily; while in their sorrow or their pain, she was even a deeper mourner than they were themselves; beyond this, she possessed the happy tact,—and in this lies half the charm,—of seeing at one glance, or discovering by one tone of the voice, what was the prevailing mood or state of feeling with those who claimed her sympathy.

Many persons have the sympathy itself, but cannot adapt it to present circumstances like Catherine. For want of reading the countenance, the voice, the whole manner, as she did by a kind of instinct, they are ever liable to renew the laughter they have once shared with you at a time when you are little disposed for mirth; and, what is still worse, they sometimes bring up your miseries in long and formidable array, to place before you at the very moment when you have turned your back upon the enemy, have cast off the mantle of gloom, and would gladly revel in the luxury of a cordial laugh.

Catherine Clifton was not only quick and real in her sympathy, but always appropriate,—and never more so than on the present occasion. True, she had within her heart quite a sufficient amount of family care,—nor did her own future look particularly cheering. True, she felt grieved and mortified at what she called her sister's apathy and coldness; but what had her family cares to do in this bright mansion, fitted up for long years of household happiness and joy?—what had her dark solitary future to do with the prospects of one about to gather into his home all that was most precious to his affections, as well as most gratifying to his tastes?

To have sat down to mourn over her own sorrows would have been at once as unjust as ungenerous to him whom she had come to serve. It is true that thoughts of home did sometimes crowd upon her so as to obscure for a moment some portion of the polish and the splendour with which she was surrounded. It is true that a painful contrast sometimes presented itself between what fortune seemed to be heaping upon one, and taking away from another; but these thoughts were not to be encouraged or dwelt upon for a moment. She almost started when they took possession of her mind,—as they did

sometimes quite suddenly; and then she would hurry away perhaps into another room, or rush into some lively conversation, or propose that some little business matters should be executed then and there, so as not to leave a single vacant corner in her heart for those dark thoughts to occupy.

Thus by living the life of other people, —living for them, with them, and almost *in* them,—Catherine Clifton managed to escape from a great many heart-troubles of her own, or at least to bear them so lightly that she troubled no one by claiming their commiseration, nor intruded her own anxious cares upon their moments of unclouded joy.

Perhaps the merit on Catherine's part was a little diminished by her natural good spirits, and the quick transition she was at all times capable of making from sorrow to joy. Here in her new occupation she was perfectly in her element, too. She could not help being pleased with most of what she saw, and with all she had to do; unless, indeed, when the flight of Henry's fancy took, as it sometimes did, so eccentric a turn as to overstep the boundary-line of good taste. But even on such occasions, Catherine managed by a little good-natured raillery to show that she did not quite approve, at the same time scrupulously abstaining from all expression of dissent.

Situated thus in her element, and with occupation for every moment of her time, with much to do which fell in exactly with her tastes and capabilities, Catherine Clifton not only laid aside all outward trace of her own domestic anxieties, but actually became like a little sprite, or rather good genius, in the new home of her future brother, flitting about with movements so light and agile, that a certain kind of grace was imparted to all she did; while her cheerful laugh, her clear ringing voice, and pliant and appropriate touches here and there, made her presence like a sunbeam, darting now into this apartment, now into that, and imparting a character of liveliness and beauty wherever it happened to fall.

Perhaps the first impression one receives of the value of persons of this character is the want that is perceptible where they are not. Very soon the apartment where Catherine was neither seen nor heard began to look empty, cold, and dark.

The sunbeam was glowing elsewhere, and the owner of the mansion liked to see his furniture with the sunbeam upon it. It was all right, then; the fringes hung gracefully, the satin stripes glanced out, the carpets lay like beds of flowers gathered softly and beautifully around his feet.

To natures like Catherine's there is always something peculiarly interesting in the circumstances of those who are about to share their lot in life together. Interest in our affairs, and especially in our happiness, is at once the most delicate flattery, and the most irresistible kindness. Few hearts can resist it; and if all knew exactly how to *show* this interest, their influence over their fellow beings might be almost unbounded.

In fact, we seldom love people so much for what they are, as for what they *do*, and do for us. It may be that they only listen to our tedious details of perplexity and annoyance; and when we have tried often, and tried in vain, to find a patient listener to whom we could unburden our hearts of petty cares, and harassing vexation, how welcome at last is the kind ear that does not turn away, the anxious wondering eye that looks for more, the voice that asks in tones of interest what happened next, or how the whole affair turned out! Ah! it is not a little thing to be a good listener. The world is more indebted to good listeners than it thinks; at all events, society would be very poor without them. There are patient listeners—kind, dull, unmoved recipients of what the surcharged speaker has to say; but this kind of passive attention is a very different affair from that which charms, and wins, and woos to further intimacy. With the former kind of listeners we grow half vexed that we should have been weak enough to pour forth our communications where they evidently produced so little impression; with the latter we grow more and more delighted, because, while they afford us the pleasure of talking without tiring them, we see that they understand us, and feel both with and for us. And then to meet such listeners again, and to find, by nice and well-timed allusions, that they remember what we told them—this is, perhaps, the most welcome incense which our self-love ever receives, and few are so insensible as not to accept it thankfully.



CHAPTER XIV.

Unto that cheerful, pleasant home
We know some heavy grief hath come,
For there are sobs and looks of gloom,
And silence in the curtained room.

THERE are persons so constituted that they judge of every object they behold by the colouring which their own eyes are able to throw over it: in their own light they see light; in their own joy they find happiness; in their own love they believe themselves beloved. A large endowment of self-esteem is necessary for this pleasant kind of delusion; hence it is more frequently found in men than in women.

Henry Linden was particularly favoured with the enjoyment of this gift. In the bestowment of his affections, it would have been scarcely possible for his choice to have fallen where he did not find, or believe himself beloved in return. In the instance to which allusion has already been made he entertained not the shadow of a doubt, nor, indeed, had he much reason for doubting. In fact, the circumstances under which the young party had been thrown together, the social meetings, the sunny

weather, the freedom and idleness of unoccupied time, and especially the sympathy which always arises out of other attachments—all these circumstances combined to soften a heart not naturally prone to receive tender impressions, nor indeed so far subdued by them, even now, as to lose either her own habitual self-possession, or that faithful, steady, but still quiet interest in her family, for which Helen Clifton was so remarkable.

Besides this, Helen was studious—she might almost have been called learned.

The very books she read, and delighted in, Philip said were enough to frighten all men from her presence. Helen did not find it so, however, for in her face and form there was attraction enough to counterbalance all the repulsion of her learning, and her books. She was gentle, too, well-dressed, and womanly in all her habits; and if she could read in many languages, she could also arrange flowers, and even paint them too, with something more than the usual amount of feminine skill. Perhaps, also, there might have been found deep buried in the secrets of her heart, a mine of warmer feelings than was wont to be exhibited in the accustomed tenor of her life. However this might be, almost any other lover than Henry Linden would have discovered in this, the lady of his choice, a certain absence of that ardour of attachment towards himself which is necessary for even a moderate amount of happiness in married life.

Congeniality there certainly was not in this connection; but people said the two were all the better suited, for that very reason: Helen was a shade too calm and stately; her lover too impetuous and flip-pant. Each would correct the faults of the other, was frequently said by their friends, and make a charming whole. That the young gentleman had chosen wisely for himself admitted not of a doubt; while on the other hand, there were some, and indeed not a few, who thought the young lady fortunate in having secured the affections of so captivating a gentleman as Henry Linden. Such was the gossip of the circle within which they moved; and the parties most interested in these remarks were not disposed to question their truth, or their right application to themselves.

Impatience on the part of one, and the habit of silent acquiescence with circumstances on the other, were now hastening on this attachment to its natural conclusion. Henry Linden was about as much prepared for pursuing his legal profession as he ever would be; but he was a young man of very respectable fortune, independently of this, and he assured his friends, with the utmost confidence, that he should study with tenfold assiduity, and consequently with far greater prospect of success, after being made happy by the fulfilment of his wishes, than was possible

for him now. This earnest and incessant pleading of his with a father who had never known how to refuse anything to his children, added to the universally acknowledged stability and general excellence of the character with whom his own was to be associated—the almost premature wisdom and prudence for which Helen Clifton was so generally commended—these considerations, but chiefly, it must be owned, the incessant appeals made to him by his son, induced Mr. Linden at last to consent that his marriage with Miss Clifton should take place much earlier than, under ordinary circumstances, would have been expected.

Still there were certain preliminaries to settle, certain arrangements to be made, which could not be done with that lightning speed which the young gentleman rather prided himself upon as marking the progress of all the transactions in which he was personally concerned. There was, at all events, a residence to select and prepare, and this of itself, with the indulgence of a taste at all times fastidious, and often whimsical, was not likely to be the work of a moment. So this marriage, which at one time was spoken of as on the point of taking place, came to be delayed from time to time, often in consequence of some trivial occurrence relating to the mere furniture of the house. Yet so it was—the same ardour which at first had hastened on the consummation of the great event, was thrown into the smaller affairs of taste; and thus it came to be divided into so many minor channels, that the great river at the fountain head appeared to be considerably reduced in velocity, if not also in depth and volume.

"Frittered away" is perhaps the best description which can be applied to the great interests, and even the master passions of persons of flip-pant and impulsive character. All great things with them are generally frittered away, even their own originally strong emotions. Running hither and thither, ever in pursuit of something new, it is impossible that they should for any length of time carry about with them the weight of the old. They must scatter something as they go, and thus even their affections often suffer loss, and they incur the charge of fickleness from no other cause, than that the greater impulse or aim

of their lives has been frittered away in the *iness*.

But while this process is going on with the young gentleman whose happiness awaits him, there are many things to be done—many changes have to be brought about in the Clifton family—many partings, many farewells have to take the place of that pleasant intercourse which has already sown the seeds of more intimate association.

Amongst other events, Seymour Clifton is obliged to tear himself away. So long as he could remain near Grace Linden, there was a strange fascination in taking his brother Philip's place by her side, and in feeling that he supplied that place even though it was only in the capacity of a brother. Grace herself was naturally dependent and confiding, and her heart was now so full of happiness, that she wanted friends about her to whom she could pour forth its joy, if she could not speak directly of the cause of that deep and innocent enjoyment; for with her it *was* innocent, because she believed as implicitly as she believed in her own existence, that he on whom she had bestowed her affections was worthy of the treasure committed to his trust. No shadow of doubt on this point had ever crossed her mind. She had seen him at his best, she had never heard him spoken of but by his nearest and his warmest friends; and besides, and above all else, was he not dedicated to the church?

Seymour Clifton saw and understood this perfect and unlimited confidence. He understood, too, on whom it was bestowed, for his brother Robert had told him by letter of his transactions with Philip. It was necessary, Robert thought, that the brother nearest to himself in age should know almost as much about the affairs of the family as he knew himself. Thus Seymour had been made acquainted with the character and habits of his brother Philip; and thus, with this knowledge in his heart, he had to walk beside the affianced bride of that same brother, to look upon her, tender, frail, and sensitive as one of the first flowers of spring, to watch her happy, nay, even proud and strong in the secret confidence she was reposing in that one foundation of her every earthly hope—he had to see and feel all this, walking every day beside her like a shadow, surrounded

by the light of her great happiness; and he had to look into his heart of hearts, and see there a love for that delicate and gentle being so intense that it threatened at times to overthrow his reason, his rectitude—all that he had ever held by as most sacred, most honourable, and most true.

Yes, he knew—he felt within himself that *his* love was worth accepting—that if he in his own character was not all that Grace Linden could admire or love, that his affection had no flaw in it. At times he felt almost proud of the magnitude, power, and value of this affection; but then it was neither known, understood, nor appreciated: he could not even make it known—by the most delicate and even silent indications—without falsehood to his brother and dishonour to himself. Again and again he told himself that if Philip was more worthy, he should be satisfied. Often and often, in the depth of the midnight hours, he had to wrestle with the strong temptation which beset him to disclose the whole truth, and to do this in the name of a righteous God. Often and often the idea presented itself, that this act was one of holy duty laid especially upon him; and but for one kind friend who happened at this season of trial to be near, there is no saying to what height or depth of self-delusion his enthusiasm, blended with his love, might have led him, still believing he was right—still fondly dreaming that duty, stern duty, rather than inclination, was his guide.

Ah! those were memorable nights and days to Seymour Clifton. Earthly existence, with all its strange vicissitudes, would have perhaps no greater trial to inflict upon him. And yet all around him looked so calm, and everything so beautiful! but none like that one countenance ever beaming even upon him; for the gentle Grace had now so much of favour in her sweet looks and manners, that she could afford to speak and smile as he thought no one ever spoke and smiled before. Yes, all the fond, tender thoughts that flowed spontaneously through her soul now formed themselves into a certain shape, and found a certain kind of utterance even for him; for was he not the brother of her betrothed? Never, on any occasion whatever, did she make direct allusion to her own attachment, but it so coloured all the world to her, so

inspired her very being with new life, so softened, harmonised, and elevated that which was pure, and soft, and high before, that a sort of atmosphere breathed out, as it were, from all her gentle looks and kind expressions, and tender, thoughtful ways towards her lover's family, and towards Seymour amongst the rest, that a nature less enthusiastic in its tender sympathies than his might well have been beguiled into the indulgence, sometimes, of a momentary hope, that he was not in himself altogether an object of indifference.

"If," Seymour thought at such times—"if it should be so? if, at the terrible risk of my own honour, I could really obtain this prize, and by the same act ensure both her happiness and mine?—Ensure hers! Is not that enough to justify any risk? and would not the act be in itself a righteous act, implicating only what the world calls honour, not what the moral sense acknowledges to be right?" Ah! it was a fearful temptation to make trial of that "if"—to test its potency, and see how far it would carry him on towards the end of all his wishes.

"It is so dreadful," Seymour said sometimes to his aunt, the only human being to whom he ever trusted himself to speak on this subject—"so dreadful to see any one going smiling on to her own destruction in this perfect unconsciousness."

"It would be more dreadful to my feelings," said his aunt, in her own calm and gentle way, "to be the person who should reveal the truth."

"Unquestionably," replied Seymour; "but the painfulness of a duty does not render it less a duty."

"There are many delicate questions connected with duty—many nice distinctions in the way of doing it."

"I know that well; I have thought often enough on the subject not to see all its difficulties."

"There is especially this point always to be considered—a duty may have to be done, but are we the persons to do it?"

"Those who feel it must surely be the right persons to act upon it."

"Those who feel it are sometimes the very last who should venture to meddle. It is quite possible to feel too much to know how to do the duty in the best manner. It is quite possible to feel too

much to be able to distinguish between our own wishes, and that which is simply right. In this case, it is surely better to be still."

"But it seems to me that nobody understands this case as I do—nobody knows the amount of misery that must fall upon one who neither deserves, nor could possibly sustain it: no one longs to rescue her as I do."

"And is there not something to be considered on the other hand? Have you not a brother?"

"To be sure I have; and I would not injure my brother for the world—not really injure him, you know."

"Only just push him off from the pedestal of hope and happiness on which he is now standing? Oh! Seymour, your own heart is deceiving you."

"I do not think it is, for I know perfectly the nature of the act which I am contemplating. I know what the world would say and think of it—I know what even my best friends would think. I know what even she herself would be liable to think. I know how odious I should appear in the eyes of every human being—perhaps in hers. And yet, if it be a duty"—

"If it be a duty, your brother Robert must do it."

"Do you think so?"

"I do."

"Why?"

"Because Robert is the oldest brother—has naturally and rightfully the charge of all such family matters; because he knows more than you do about poor Philip's life and character; and above all, because Robert is impartial, and can have no selfish end to serve."

"But Robert seems to me to lean so much to Philip."

"And should not a brother lean to a brother?"

"But a guilty brother!"—

"Who is not guilty, Seymour?"

"In the sight of God, I know that all are guilty; but socially—morally, Philip has done so very wrong."

"The more need, then, for the exercise of patience to bring him back. Do you not remember what was said of the one stray sheep?"

"I do, and if Philip alone were implicated, I would do anything—suffer any—

thing, to save him : at least I feel sometimes as if I would. At other times, I confess there is a strong sense of justice warring in my heart against him, and I think, why should Philip enjoy so many advantages, and be treated with so much indulgence, only to abuse the blessings so lavishly showered upon him ?”

“Oh ! Seymour ; those are dangerous questions, only to be answered by each man's individual soul to its Maker. To return to that which we may better understand, I should say that Philip is constitutionally more liable to temptation than you or Robert ; he has neither the intellectual resources of the one, nor the strength of character of the other. Besides which, he is very young ; and if I might venture to say so, has been placed entirely out of his element in the course of life which has been selected for him.”

“You think so, then, as well as others ?”

“I do indeed.”

“There has been the curse of his existence, and of mine !”

“Hush ! Seymour, do not speak in that way. Whatever false steps we poor, half-blind, benighted creatures take, desiring—praying to do right, and asking God to direct us to what is right—whatever false steps we take in this way, and whatever sad consequences may ensue, He who knows all our weakness, folly, and shortsightedness, is able and willing to convert these consequences into blessings to us, however calamitous they may appear to be when judged of according to worldly wisdom.”

“Do you think, then, that a blessing can ever come out of my wretched way of living ?”

“I do.”

“I wish I could think so.”

“Yes, and who knows but the blessing may be greater, and richer, than if you had followed the bent of your own inclinations ?”

“Then you attach no importance to the use of common sense, and human wisdom, in these matters ?”

“Pray don't think I said that, or meant such a thing to be understood. I believe devoutly that common sense is given us to use for common purposes—indeed for all purposes ; and that he who will not use this glorious gift, even in the holiest duties to which a responsible being can be called, is

not only as foolish, but as guilty, as the man who wilfully shuts his eyes, and declares he cannot read his Bible.”

“I am afraid some people are very guilty, then, as well as very foolish.”

“My dear Seymour, do not let us judge individuals, or their actions. I am afraid the whole world—the social world, as we find it, and converse with it—is made up of a tangled web of mistakes from which a power Divine alone can extricate any struggling soul. People have been making mistakes ever since the world began. Eve herself had a command that was simple, clear, and intelligible enough ; she knew perfectly well from whence it came, and yet by a grievous and fatal mistake, she persuaded herself that the voice of the tempter had more real wisdom in it than the voice of the Most High. And now, Seymour, to return to the subject on which we first began to speak, I consider that you are yourself, at this very moment, in the most imminent danger of making a fearful and calamitous mistake. Would it not be well to look more at the peril in which you are now standing, and less at the mistakes of others ?”

“Yes ; but if those mistakes should have been, however remotely, the means of bringing me into that peril ?”

“You are only standing in the same position as the whole human race. All have been brought into peril by the mistakes of their parents, up even to that remote period to which allusion has been made. The great question with you is, how you can best profit by what you see and feel in your own person of the mistakes of those who have gone before you. You cannot prevent these mistakes having been made. It is often equally impossible to avert these consequences as regards this life ; but there is one thing we can always do—we can always make the best of the circumstances in which we find ourselves. You, Seymour, may possibly do more than that ; for when you come to have children of your own, you may bring them up more wisely, from the very fact of seeing where, and how, your own parents have erred. Thus, you see, you will be a whole generation in advance of what you might have been, had no such mistakes been made. Had you never felt the disadvantages of which you complain, you might have been

the parent to commit the error, and your child, some little sensitive Seymour such as you were a few years ago, would have been the one to complain of you. Now, you will be the wise parent, your son the happy being to profit by your wisdom. So the world goes on: the good which a beneficent Creator has all along designed for it, slowly working its way out of the evil, the folly, the strange mistaken doings of those creatures whom he has placed here to fulfil his will, but who madly and perversely prefer to fulfil their own."

"Ah! my dear Aunt, this is all very well, if one could only think and talk in this way, as you do, for instance, without feeling in one's own heart and life the bitter consequences of which we have spoken."

"Do you suppose, Seymour, that I have always been a thinker and a talker only? Do you suppose I have not also been a sufferer?"

"I cannot tell. You appear so cheerful, and so calm now, that I should scarcely imagine you had suffered much—not as I suffer, at all events."

"God only knows how we any of us suffer. When you have lived to my age, Seymour, you will be better acquainted with this fact, that it is not an easy life, exempt from trouble, which can give any one the cheerful calm of which you speak. I believe it is rather to have lost all which the heart most pines for, and so to have been made willing to receive whatever God may please to give. The sooner we are brought to this state the happier, the more cheerful our lives will be. Some are brought to it by gentle means, others by protracted discipline, and others by one sudden, desperate wrench which breaks the strong anchor of the heart, as the vessel is broken from its moorings and dashed upon a troubled sea, God only knows how long. But, my dear Seymour, what does it matter if only the sure and peaceful haven is found at last?"

"Yes, at last; but that last is so long in coming."

"It will come in God's own time, Seymour, often, sooner than it is expected, or wished for."

"Oh! when will it come to me! I cannot bear this struggle long. I feel like a caged bird that must dash out my life

against the wires of my prison. Oh! I could do so much, and bear so much if it was only for some purpose,—if I had only a motive, an object to do and suffer for. Do you think it would be very wrong, my dear Aunt,—very wrong, or very foolish, if sometime or other I should absent myself from what they call my duty; if I should quit my ship, for instance, and so be left behind in some distant island, or in some other way so manage as just to be missing, and never heard of again?"

"Indeed I do think it would be both wrong and foolish, thus to break the trust reposed in you by your parents. I think it is always wrong and foolish to do a thing in a covert and mysterious manner, so as to bring trouble on your friends, when the same end might have been answered by open, honourable conduct. To speak plainly, Seymour, I do think even now, that your course of life might be altered for you without dishonour. I would do my best to intercede for you. What do you say?"

"Not now, my dear Aunt, not now. I will give it one more trial. It would be dreadful for me to throw myself back upon my family just now, when Robert is pressed on every hand with claims which he does not know how to meet. No, I will give the sea one more trial. Perhaps it will swallow me up this time, and then I shall trouble none of you again."

"Seymour, I cannot bear to hear you talk in that manner. If in the path you pursue—and no one absolutely compels you to walk in it—if in the path you pursue, there are trials to be encountered, meet those trials like a man, not in a half-desperate, half-desponding spirit, which is sure to yield in the first conflict. I have more dread of this kind of spirit, that any language can describe; more, almost, than I have of your brother Philip's strong passions."

"How so?"

"Because it is so deceptive and insidious, and can assume so many pleasant forms. But, beyond this, beware. I have lost so much by it. But, no matter: let us speak of other things. Did you see any one enter by the garden-gate just now?"

"No, Did you?"

"Yes; a tall figure like your brother

Robert's walked into the house, it seemed to me, by the side door."

"Impossible! He was not expected, was he?"

"Not that I knew of. Shall we go into the house?"

It was true enough; the figure which had entered the garden, and walked into the house, was that of Robert Clifton. His business was with his mother, and they remained closeted together for the space of an hour, to the no small astonishment of the rest of the family, who feared that some evil tidings might have brought their brother thus unexpectedly amongst them.

During this hour which seemed unbearable in its length, all waited and wondered. Even Mr. Clifton began to feel suspicious and painfully agitated, so that all the kind soothing and the gentle attentions of his sister were needed to beguile him into the garden, or anywhere away from the scene of this strangely prolonged interview. The sisters walked together with Seymour betwixt them, backwards and forwards on a gravel-walk before the windows of the house, ever and anon directing anxious looks towards the still closed door of a small breakfast-room, into which Mrs. Clifton had retired with her son.

"I am quite sure," said Kitty, "that I heard sobbing as I passed that door. Something dreadful must have happened to Philip. Don't you think it is so, Seymour?"

Kitty was too much agitated herself, and too deeply absorbed in her own thoughts, to observe the change which this suggestion brought upon her brother's face. Once he stopped suddenly, and would have clasped his hands upon his forehead, as if to keep down the contending emotions which threatened to overthrow his reason; but his sisters drew his hands within theirs, and gently led him on, unsuspecting of the excitement which so powerfully agitated his frame having any other cause than anxiety on behalf of his younger brother.

Indeed Philip Clifton had lately become a source of serious and painful anxiety to other members of his family besides his brothers. Robert had not told all to any but Seymour. He had, however, thought

it right to explain so much as to put them upon their guard should any attempt be made to obtain money from them; as well as to prepare them in some degree for the recurrence of what might be alarming or disastrous in that quarter. It was right, too, Robert thought, that all should know the conditions of trial on which his brother now stood with the Lindens; and, beyond this, it had been pleasant to him to report the favourable progress of this trial so far as it went, in order that all might rejoice together.

"Now, indeed," thought Seymour, as he still walked with his sisters, compelled to talk with them, though he did so incoherently, and with his thoughts elsewhere, "now, indeed, if the trial should be over; if Philip should have disgraced and degraded himself below all hope?"

"I think it must be about Philip," said Kitty again, and still glancing, every time she passed, at the closed door, "I think it must be about Philip. What do you think, Seymour? Do speak to us, and tell us what you think."

"Oh—I?—yes; I should think—but, indeed, it is impossible to say. Has there been a letter lately?"

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed both sisters, "a most pleasant, clear, and hopeful letter."

"I, for one," said Helen, "do not believe that anything is wrong there. I think it is the business. Perhaps there has been some heavy loss, and then what shall we do?"

"Oh! you need not mind so much," said Kitty.

"I should mind for others, if not for myself," replied Helen. "But, see, the door is opening. It is Robert himself. He beckons us in. I suppose we must all go."

With these words, and at a sign from their brother, the little party turned silently into the house. Seymour felt not the ground beneath his feet; he felt only the beating of his heart, which he almost fancied they all must hear.

Robert Clifton had no other greeting for his brother and his sisters than a silent pressure of their hands, as he drew them into the parlour. The object which struck their attention there was the figure of Mrs. Clifton, in an attitude of deep distress, and weeping bitterly. She stretched her

arms towards her children, as if she would embrace them; but sank again into her chair, unequal to the effort.

"Sit down," said Robert; "I will explain all."

"Is it poor Philip?" asked Kitty.

"No, no," replied her brother, "don't be too much disturbed. It is only a common calamity which has befallen us. Let us thank God that it has not come out of any one's misconduct, nor has to do with guilt in any way. Seymour, let us thank God for that."

"Yes," said Seymour, "let us thank God." But his lips were white as ashes while he spoke.

"You know, I think," Robert went on to say, "that the business on which we are all dependent has not been particularly prosperous of late—has, indeed, been a losing rather than a profitable concern."

"We do," said his sisters; but Seymour offered no response.

"During this last month we have had some heavy losses, and yesterday's post brought us letters of a very alarming nature. To-day the intelligence is confirmed. Many of our city merchants are losers in the same way, but we are almost reduced to beggary. The question now is, what to do?"

"Then all is right with Philip?" asked the sisters.

"Perfectly," said Robert; "at least so far as I know. Only the money which has been advanced for him leaves us so much the worse."

"Oh, never mind that," said Kitty.

"No, never mind that," echoed Helen.

"If every one does their best, and nobody goes wrong, we shall all do very well, I feel no doubt."

"Your marriage portion, Helen—"

"Oh! don't think a moment of that. Even if I had a portion, I should give it all back into the family stock, of that I am quite sure."

"Is there nothing I can do?" asked Seymour, in the manner of one awakening from a dream. Had he been dreaming? Or was the pit of darkness in which his soul had just been struggling—was that the reality, and his present rebound of better feeling—his liberation, as it seemed, from the very jaws of hell—was this only the dream?

Whatever it was, Seymour rose and seemed to shake himself free "Is there nothing I can do?" he asked again.

"Yes," said Robert. "You will forgive me when I say, you must no longer loiter here. I don't know what enchantment holds you; but, Seymour, my dear fellow, you must go, indeed you must."

Seymour's countenance in an instant became overspread with the deepest crimson. His eyes flashed, his whole figure seemed to grow taller and stronger. There was some anger in the energy which his general attitude and bearing assumed; there was more of pain—nay, of absolute agony, in the quivering of his lip. The inward struggle to a soul like his was almost more than nature could sustain. But the good this time obtained the mastery, and he answered in a firm and manly voice, "I will go, Robert. I will do my best, and if I fail it shall not be for want of determination on my part."

Robert shook his brother by the hand as if to confirm this resolution; but he did not speak, for his own heart was heavy—his spirit sorely pressed with care. He had spent sleepless nights of late, and weary days, toiling without hope. It seemed as if the very spring of his life was gone out of him—as if some master wheel in the machinery of his existence had been prematurely worn away, and yet he must continue to work on—he must continue to support others when needing support himself. But Robert had no morbid or sentimental tenderness. He took his troubles only as they came, and they were so commonplace and practical, so real, and so urgent in their pressure, that he had even less time than inclination to sit down and despond.

"And now," said he, "there are many questions which in a few minutes must be answered, for I must be back again to town; what shall we do about my father? Is it necessary that he should be told?"

"You know best," replied Helen.

"Oh, let us keep it all to ourselves," exclaimed Kitty.

Their mother had been silent up to this time—silent only for her heavy sobs; but she now gave it as her opinion that, so far as was possible, this matter should be kept from her husband; and thus it was settled by general consent.



CHAPTER XV.

The guileless heart that never knew deceit
Is troubled now; the old free open look
Meets not the glance confidingly and sweet,
But readeth like a blurred and blotted book.

It would not have been easy to find any situation more agreeable to Henry Linden, for the time being, or any occupation more in accordance with his taste, than that of superintending the various operations now going on in his own house, so far, at least, as embellishment was concerned. His ingenuity was fertile, his resources were ample, and it was all for himself, and for those whom he loved; whose admiration, and participation in his delight were consequently fully calculated upon. Henry liked to command, and he had a whole army of workmen obedient to his bidding; he liked to select and appropriate, and he had London and Paris, too, for the sphere of his choice; he liked a kind of busy idleness which did not tax his abilities either of body or mind too much, and he had now an occupation for every moment, in planning what other people were to do, and seeing that they did it well.

To most men this occupation would have been an intolerable annoyance, but

not so to him. For most men it would have appeared degrading, effeminate, paltry; but it was not so with him, partly because he was never really absorbed in anything, and, therefore, had always some degree of attention to spare from the less to bestow upon the greater when it fell in his way, and partly because of a certain playful, easy manner, peculiar to himself, which even, when he did trifle, was wont to sit upon him like a grace.

We will not, however, pretend to say, that any man thus occupied could retain his manliness undiminished. But, when people act naturally and earnestly, they are seldom ridiculous. Thus, a Mercury may alight with winged feet, where a Hercules, half-poised in air, would be a monster of absurdity.

Henry Linden was of that nature which is generally called mercurial, and his habits, tastes, and movements, were in perfect keeping with a form of light and graceful symmetry, and a countenance more pleasing than handsome, more attractive than commanding. In his more elevated moods there was a certain air and tone of poetry about him, which, if he could have been tragical, might have

produced considerable effect; but he was so much more alive to the ridiculous than the sublime, that he would seldom allow himself to advance into the region of romance.

So far as Catherine Clifton had hitherto held any intercourse with her future brother, she had found no want in him. What he might be to her, or to any one, in seasons of sorrow, or on occasions of serious and solemn interest, she had never asked; perhaps she had never thought of such occasions, even for herself. Once or twice, she had pictured Henry overwhelmed with grief, and the effect upon her own mind had been a conviction that this must never be, that she would far rather, if it were possible, bear the burden and the grief herself.

At present, however, there was no prospect of her being called upon for any effort so heroic. Human life, in its most varied aspects, and most extensive range, could scarcely offer an instance of more perfect enjoyment than that which lighted Henry Linden's face just now, excepting only when the operations under his direction failed in producing the desired results, or when a thought of Helen's absence crossed his brow with marks of momentary vexation, that she had found it possible to refuse to be near him, to share his happiness, as well as to confirm his choice in all that he was doing, and doing, he persuaded himself, more for her than for himself.

By degrees these transient indications of dissatisfaction occurred less frequently, and were more easily dispelled when they did occur. "Henry is very amiable," Catherine often said to herself; she never thought him more so than in ceasing, as he soon did, to recur with any kind of bitterness to the disappointment which her sister had caused him, scarcely, indeed, with any expression of regret.

"I don't think," she said to her aunt, "that I could have forgiven Helen so soon, had I been in his place; but Henry is very amiable. Don't you think he is, dear aunt?"

Aunt Ann was very busy counting some stitches in a difficult piece of knitting. When she had finished, she said, with that shortness and asperity not unusual to ladies who have many stitches to count, "To

forget looks sometimes more amiable than to forgive."

Catherine looked very earnestly into the countenance of her aunt; but she was again counting—"fifteen, sixteen," and so on. It was of no use attempting to elicit anything pleasant under such circumstances, and an explanation was not to be thought of. So Catherine sat very still on a low ottoman beside her aunt, mentally conjugating the verb *to forget*.

It was, perhaps, well for the elder lady, that she had this endless knitting as her resource. Thus, when the house had to be visited, she took her work with her, and, after a general inspection, or after giving her opinion on any particular point, she placed herself in some apartment least likely to be invaded by workpeople, and, taking out her little book of mystical directions, buried herself in this employment, until called upon for her opinion again, or until she saw by her watch that it was time to return home.

In the mean time Catherine did all the surprises, all the approbations, in fact, all that she was called upon to do, to admiration. Henry had never imagined, up to that period, that she was capable of making herself half so interesting and agreeable; for she threw into all her responses such freshness, as well as reality of feeling, that his own suggestions seemed to be doubled in value by the lights they struck out, when flashing upon her susceptible mind. In short, no two beings upon earth could have been better suited for the business they had to do. They were like two happy children going hand in hand through sunny meadows. To both the present moment was just now all in all. They neither of them stopped to inquire whether the flowers which surrounded them would bloom for ever, nor breathed with less enjoyment the richly perfumed air, because it was not in all respects the breath of health to them.

What a pity that Catherine Clifton was not beautiful, like her sister Helen! Does Nature, then, make fearful mistakes, as well as mothers, or is it not rather chargeable upon the short-sightedness of man, that he so often commits the grand mistake of supposing that where there is beauty, there must, of necessity, be everything

congenial to his own nature, everything essential to his own happiness?

The amusement which Catherine Clifton found in her present occupation was, perhaps, not the less welcome to her in being blended, as it sometimes was, with occasional crumbs scattered to her vanity, which it was by no means slow to pick up and appropriate. Beloved as she knew herself to be at home, and petted, and caressed as her childhood had been, there had still been mixed with all the kindness she was so accustomed to receive a certain manner of treatment which showed pretty plainly that she was still considered somewhat in the character of a child. Kitty, the darling of the family, was only "little Kitty" still. So far as the title expressed endearment, it was very precious to her feelings; nor had she ever yet experienced any serious desire to fill a more exalted or dignified position. That which she had not felt the want of, however, came not the less gratefully for being unexpected, and even unwished for; and now that Henry Linden, —Henry, of all people upon earth, spoke to her, and treated her as if she was a woman, and capable of being a friend,—nay, even an adviser,—the secret gratification this conviction imparted was beyond what words could have expressed. Wanting words, or rather not desiring to use them, it shone out from her eyes, it brightened in her smile, it gave music to her voice, it animated her movements, and made her far more charming as a companion than many beautiful women are capable of being.

To natures possessing only an average amount of vanity, it is much to be referred to as an adviser; but to a nature capable of deeper feeling,—of sympathy, affection, tenderness, the office of adviser is only accepted joyfully as giving assurance that the friend who is appealed to for counsel in difficulty, will be the same whose holy office it will be to administer comfort in distress.

It was with a very natural and honest vanity, then, that Catherine busied herself under the direction of her future brother. For some time he had been a brother to her. It was a good thing to have got that point quite settled. Nothing could disturb it now—Henry Linden was Helen's husband, and her brother. Here was

safety, peace, and satisfaction. In this thought, Catherine was so perfectly at ease, that she could now venture upon question and comment with all the familiarity of a sister. She could also laugh at caprice; and if the whole truth must be told, return pertness for raillery. All this, however, she did under a certain reserve, or, rather, strictly within certain bounds. Her womanly instincts told her exactly how far to go. Within those bounds her liveliness and her freedom were scarcely surpassed, even on the part of her brother.

Henry Linden had, perhaps, never been so pleasantly humoured—so agreeably amused, in his whole life before. In his intercourse with Helen Clifton, all the amusement had arisen out of the vividness and intensity of his own impressions. A midnight watcher may amuse himself with the moon, if his own heart is so full of bright impressions that he must play them off upon something. Thus he may see faces and figures in the moon—he may even imagine, profane thought! that the moon makes droll grimaces at him. So, in the calm and gracious orb which ruled the passing hour of his existence, Henry Linden had found all that he desired, even amusement, for the time being; but it was certainly of his own creating.

Helen Clifton was so beautiful that the same illusion might have occurred to wiser men than her lover. Her face, her figure, all her movements, were characterized by a loveliness that partook of softness as well as dignity. Her voice was very sweet, too, and she never spoke abruptly, but in perfectly modulated tones, and with a correctness of utterance and emphasis, which, being devoid of affectation, soothed the ear like music. In fact, it *was* music; for what combination of sounds, however skilfully arranged, can be compared to the clear tones of a human voice, when it speaks the language of a cultivated mind with perfect correctness and fluency?

It might be supposed that to a young man, like Helen's lover, the language of passion, of drollery, or caprice, would have been more captivating than these silvery and often serious tones; but we are so often charmed with qualities the

very opposite of our own, that Henry rendered all the deeper homage to his stately queen, that she never descended to extravagance, caprice, or even excess, in anything. The extravagance he could supply himself, excess was his element, and as for caprice, he tried it so often that he was almost tired of his own, and would have been greatly annoyed to find it in another.

So far all went well. The season of the year, the shortness of the time, the society, the associations, and circumstances under which Henry fell in love—for in his case the fact deserved no better name—all tended to prevent his making the discovery, often made too late, that life, to him, continued always on those terms, would be rather flat and wearisome. Had the clouds opened, and a supernatural voice proclaimed this fact, he would not have believed it with Helen by his side. It was for after years to reveal. Such voices do not speak often out of opening clouds in summer weather; they wait for the dark days of November gloom, for the long evenings of cold winter, when the fire burns dimly in the grate, and the storm murmurs sullenly without, and no pleasant friend comes smiling in. Then, when the slow *tête-à-tête* flags, when headache supervenes, when the endless work is tangled, or stitches want counting, and eyes that once beamed beauty are drooping and dull—it is then that the voice speaks out from the heaped-up ashes on the hearth, declaring the fact accomplished which might have been prevented, had it spoken on an earlier day—declaring that life is wearisome, because the two who have bound themselves together in this endless bondage, are not suited to each other, and had better never have been born. Yes, there are others who make mistakes besides the poor short-sighted mother; and their mistakes are sometimes quite as calamitous as hers.

Did Henry Linden begin to think that he had made a mistake? So far from that, he thought that if, in marrying one sister, he could have always the cheerful, pleasant society of the other, he should be a very happy man. These were his thoughts, at present, for it was an enjoyment comparatively new to him, not only to amuse, but in his turn to be amused; to have all

his own delight reflected back again from an intelligent and happy face; all his playfulness played back; all his follies countenanced by folly equal to his own. There are few men, even more stoical than Henry Linden, who would not, under his circumstances, have felt themselves fortunate in such a companion as Catherine; and then she was so kind, too, so pleased to humour him to the bent of his wishes, levying no other tax upon him than a little extra railleury or teasing, when he happened to be more than usually unreasonable.

It was so right, Catherine thought, that the master should do as he liked in his own house—it was so entirely her business to conform, or why had she come there? Besides, she liked the occupation. It was, in all respects, suited to her tastes, and beyond this, it was very welcome, because it helped her to put away sad thoughts of home. Sometimes, it is true, these recollections rushed upon her with almost overwhelming force; sometimes she felt absolutely startled at the sound of her own laughter, so unkind as it seemed to her home friends; and yet what help or comfort would it render them for her to sit down to mope and cry? No, she might just as well laugh while she could, especially when it pleased Henry so much to see her cheerful and gay. So the two went on very merrily together, while Aunt Ann still took out her knitting, and sat very patiently by some snug fire awaiting the time when the business of the day, or perhaps its amusement, should be over.

In the meantime, Helen Clifton wrote very grave, sad letters to her lover, scarcely touching upon those subjects which naturally interested him, but dwelling chiefly, and at considerable length, upon the altered prospects of her family, upon her mother's depression of spirits, her father's melancholy incapability, and her own tender feelings for those whom it was still impossible she could help.

"I wish her feelings were a little more tender in another quarter," said her lover, one day, as he twisted in his fingers a letter he had just received, until there was scarcely a legible line remaining. He appeared deeply mortified, as well he might, for he had written especially to consult Helen upon some matter of taste

connected with the drawing-room of the new house, and she had made no allusion to the subject whatever.

"I really believe," said Henry, at last, tearing the paper into shreds, "that Helen thinks she is already married to her father and mother, and will never have a heart to give to any one else. This is a little too bad, Kitty; don't you think it is?"

"Oh," said Catherine, "you must make some allowance for Helen's strong home affections."

"But I want," said the lover, very naturally, "I want this to be her home, and she won't acknowledge it as such."

"Wait only a little while," said Catherine; "she has not got used to this home yet; she does not even know how beautiful it is, nor how pleasant you are capable of making it."

"But she knows me," said the gentleman, rather impatiently.

"Not in your own house."

"You do, at any rate, Kitty; you know me at home."

"Yes, and in this way I know the best of you."

"You will give a favourable report of me to your sister, then, will you?"

"Indeed I will; though I am sure she does not need my report to make her think well of you."

"I think she needs something; I can't imagine what it is. There must be some fault either in her or in myself. For I own to you, Kitty, I don't feel quite the happy man I did a few weeks ago. What is it, do you think?"

"Nothing, just nothing in the world. We are all apt, you know, to be occupied with present things. Helen sees always before her the same picture of trouble and anxiety, and her thoughts and words take the impress of that. You see always what is pleasant and satisfactory in your present possessions and in your future prospects; perhaps you may think and write a little too exclusively about these. All this is very natural, but beyond this there is nothing, indeed, dear Henry; so don't conjure up phantoms to frighten yourself with. Look here, don't you know that I am a magician; this is my wand, a yard wand, to be sure, but no worse for that. With this wand, then,

I bid these ugly phantoms begone. Now see how beautiful everything looks again. Come, bow before damask and gold lace, flowery carpet and shining steel, and, like a true and faithful knight, acknowledge your obligations to a yard wand."

"Catherine, may I spend this evening with you?"

"If you wish it, and if aunt Ann does, certainly."

"You will be at home?"

"I ~~can~~ be at home; and I will, if you promise to come."

"You were intending to go out, then?"

"My aunt is going, and she did say something about my going with her; but I can easily tell her I would rather be left at home."

"Somehow, I would rather you did not say anything to her about my coming, but just manage to remain at home."

"Very well—as you like. Only, I hate anything in the shape of concealment."

"There will be no concealment in the matter,—for if I come, she will find me seated comfortably in her own arm-chair when she returns."

"It is not that, it is my knowing it beforehand, and not telling her, that I mind. But really I don't see much harm in that; the thing is so insignificant altogether, begging your pardon, and you yourself so uncertain, that in all probability you will not come, and I shall miss my visit, and sit musing by myself for nothing."

"Do you care about the visit?"

"Not the least in the world."

"Then be sure you stay at home, and see whether I won't come."

Catherine was true to herself in this, that she did not attach the slightest importance, either to the request she was complying with, or whether it would be fulfilled or neglected. She did think very seriously about her sister's letter, and the effect it had evidently produced; and she determined that very evening should be set apart for writing very fully, and at great length, to Helen, hoping that by this means she might bring about a better understanding. She would remind her sister, she thought, of all the excellent and amiable qualities of her lover, and how deep was his devotion to her. She would also venture to say, what a chance Helen was throwing away of

giving happiness where she was now inflicting pain. She had indeed much to say, and she felt there was urgent need for it to be said. So she *would* remain at home that evening, whatever her aunt might urge to the contrary.

It so happened, when the evening came, that Miss Clifton was more anxious for her niece to accompany her than Catherine had expected; and, uncomfortable as people mostly are, when they have a double motive, only one of which they venture to avow, Catherine managed her refusal in a manner so awkward, and even embarrassed, as to strike the attention of her aunt, who, however, only fixed an inquiring look upon her face, without betraying in words—perhaps without even feeling in her own mind the slightest suspicion—that the whole truth had not been told her.

Catherine was the most blundering of all deceivers. If she had ever so much as a secret upon her hands, however innocent it might be in itself, she made it so evidently the object of her care, and altogether created so great a bustle about it, that like children who hide themselves and will not be quiet, she always betrayed by her look and manner that she had something else to tell; and, to confess the truth, almost always did tell it, and that pretty soon. Now, however, the secret was not her own; it was so very trifling too—it really *was* no secret after all. But still Catherine spoke only of the letter she wanted to write to her sister as her reason for remaining at home, and she made so much of the letter, and of the necessity there was for writing it that very day, that at last her aunt departed without her, not quite satisfied in her own mind that all was clear and straightforward, though she had no idea what there could be to conceal. Perhaps some lover's quarrel, the good lady concluded, as she thought the matter over alone; and yet why they should not tell her she was at a loss to conjecture, for hitherto she had been the confidant of all Helen's feelings, even to those hopes and anxieties which naturally belong to a first attachment, as well as to the near prospect of marriage.

Miss Clifton returned from her visit that evening at an hour somewhat later than usual for her; for such was the primitive nature of her habits, that her times of visiting and of returning home scarcely

kept pace with those of any other person, and hence her objection to visiting in general, because she did not like to be singular, and yet could not easily deviate from her accustomed habits. Late as the hour was for her to return, it struck her as *very* late indeed to find a gentleman seated beside her niece in the parlour. Catherine, too, did not spring up to meet her as usual, but busied herself with desk, and writing-paper—putting away, the good lady thought, the all-important letter. It was a pity, she said to herself, that the young man should have chosen to come on that evening: he must have hindered Catherine very much in what she had to do. In fact, her niece had better have been with her than trifling her time away, as it seemed to her that Catherine sometimes did, with this young man. Here she checked herself, for was the young man not Helen's lover? Miss Clifton was afraid she was growing irritable: perhaps she discovered the change on this occasion almost as much as she ever did in her life, for, to tell the truth, she did feel a little ruffled—first, by the refusal of her niece to accompany her, though she knew there were young people invited purposely to meet Catherine, and then at the symptoms of mystery which attended the affair altogether; lastly, she did not like that any gentleman, however nearly he might be about to be connected—she did not like that any gentleman should be sitting in her house, alone with her niece, at that late hour. Servants, she said to herself, often made remarks; and she was so strict with hers, that she felt the more bound to extend her discipline to those departments of her household in which her own honour was more nearly concerned.

Altogether, aunt Ann was not quite pleased. Catherine felt this, though not a single word of anger or reproof was allowed to pass her lips. Perhaps Henry felt it, too, for as soon as civility allowed of his doing so, he took up his hat, and bid the ladies good night.

"I am afraid," said aunt Ann to her niece, "you have been hindered in your letter. I am afraid you have not been able to write it."

"Not entirely," Catherine replied.

"Did he come early?" asked Miss Clifton, not deigning to give the gentleman a name.

"Not very early," Catherine replied.

"Had he forgotten something?"

"I think he had."

"Something he wished you to say in the letter?"

"The letter was about him; and—"

"He knew you were writing it?"

"It was written on his behalf; at least I intended to serve him by writing it."

"I am not curious, Catherine—at least, I hope I am not guilty of *idle* curiosity; but I have been so long accustomed to the most undisguised intercourse with my nieces—in my own house, too—I do confess, Catherine, I should like to see this letter. You will remember, I am in the habit of seeing all Helen's to you, and hitherto all yours to her. It is hard to me to ask to see this, others having been shown to me without asking for."

"Not to-night, dear aunt," said Catherine, with averted face, and agitated voice.

"Only trust me for this once. I promise to show you the letter before it is sent away, but not to-night."

"Well, well," said the aunt, a good deal appeased by this promise; "I hope I don't intrude upon your privacy too much. Old women, you know, Catherine, are proverbially curious, and often very troublesome. Good night, my love; you will forgive me if I have been too encroaching. I live in a very quiet way. I like everything open and clear. I have not been accustomed to mysteries in my simple household."

Catherine made no remark. She was afraid, if she trusted herself to speak, that she might say too much. Seeing that her aunt looked weary and dispirited, she lighted her candle as usual, held out her arm to support her in going upstairs, asked if she had enjoyed her visit, and then, having reached the door of her apartment, pressed a kiss upon her cheek, bid her good night, and returned to the parlour for her writing materials.

Catherine Clifton, again we say, you are a bad deceiver. In bidding your aunt good night, you pressed her beloved form as closely to your heart as if it had been breaking; and in kissing her as you did, with more fondness than usual, you left a tear upon her cheek.

"Well, well," said the kind lady, after she had wiped off the tear with her handkerchief, and stood musing for a minute

or two, "well, well, I suppose I shall know all in due time. These matters don't concern me. Perhaps it is scarcely wise, or scarcely delicate, in me to meddle as I have done. I regret that I betrayed so much curiosity about the letter. It is all right, no doubt. My nieces are good girls. Perhaps it would be better for me to trust them more, and busy myself less about their matters."

The good lady, having arrived at this conclusion, and feeling rather more weary than usual, sat down in her accustomed chair, opened her Bible, read attentively for a longer time than was her wont, and then, abundantly refreshed, strengthened, and comforted, retired to rest.

Catherine meanwhile, with flushed cheek and trembling hand, was, as already said, busily gathering up the fragments of paper which lay upon her desk. She would have felt no objection in the world to show her aunt every word of that letter to her sister, had such been in existence; but of this luckless document not one single word had yet been written.

Like many other persons, Catherine had no idea, when first practising a little deception upon her aunt—quite a harmless deception, too—she had no idea that this single act, with a good motive for its foundation, at all events a kind motive, would lead her on to first one and then another little act of trickery, if not actually of deception, until she scarcely knew where to lay hold of the tangled thread, nor how it could be drawn out without making matters worse.

In all the confusion of Catherine's feelings, there seemed to be no one distinct idea. How that evening had passed she could not for her life have told. It seemed to her scarcely more than five minutes after her aunt had left the house before she re-entered the door. "Poor Henry!" she kept continually repeating to herself these words. They were dangerous words to her, but she felt no danger.

On that strange evening Catherine had seen a new phase of her brother's character. He was unhappy! she had never seen nor even imagined him so before. He was tender, kind, affectionate; in their earliest acquaintance she had sometimes found him so; or perhaps she had fancied that

he was so, but now she knew it; and Helen was so cold! How could she be so cold!—she must be made of marble, instead of ice, not to melt under the intense pity which Catherine had been made to feel that night. Finally, Henry had shed tears! Oh, talk of woman's tears, and tell us they once lost a world; but if man could know what woman feels when big drops of agony roll down his proud cheeks, he would not wonder that the consequences should sometimes involve far more than an empire to her.

Henry Linden had wept that night tears of sorrow as sincere as they were bitter. He was no deceiver, no pretender either. All was real with him for the moment. The disappointment occasioned by that letter had been real; the view it opened to him of his future life was real, too. Vexation and annoyance had been the effect of many former letters of a similar description; the silken cord of his affection had been sorely stretched before. It had been knotted, twisted, dealt with very hardly, he thought; but now, from some cause or other, it seemed to have suddenly snapped asunder. All such cords may be tried too much; all may be broken either by the slow operation of some painful process, or the rude jerk of a careless and unfeeling hand. And what is left when the silken cord is broken?

What had Henry Linden left? He had his mansion, his castle of safety, his bower of bliss. But what was mansion, castle, or bower, without his love? Nothing but the cage without the bird—the empty cage without the song, the flutter, and the life, which alone could give it either beauty or charm.

In one wild, impulsive, and terrible outburst of passion, Henry Linden had that evening given vent to all, and to much more, than he really felt. He had shocked his poor, frightened auditor with the force and the extravagance of his expressions. She had been angry as well as frightened: but then he had wept. She had pleaded for her sister, and promised to plead with her; but then he had wept. She had reasoned, remonstrated, reproached, upbraided, but then he had wept. What could she do more but pity? She had pitied him with the warmth of her whole heart.

They had talked together of many things never mentioned between them before, such as the requisites for mutual happiness in married life; they had gone deeper than ever before—perhaps deeper than it was wise to go—into their individual capabilities for enduring misery. They had each said what they could bear; but they had also said what they could *not* bear, and live. It was a dangerous kind of intercourse that which they held together; it always is dangerous to hold intercourse with those whose feelings have burst open the floodgates of reason; but Catherine continually said to herself, "He is my brother;" and in that fact she found safety and protection. After all, it was the pity, the intense pity, which wrung her heart to its centre, that led her on to listen rather than to speak; for she herself said little, only just so much as sympathy forced from her, but that little was very tender, and it was very true. "Is he not my brother?" she continually repeated to herself; "and if I should turn a deaf ear to his distress, where else could he go? Beyond this, is it not just possible that I may console, strengthen, and do him good, as well as feel for him? Blessed thought! In this way I may be to him a true sister—a sister of charity indeed."

But before Catherine retired to rest that night the painful sense of that concealment which she imagined had been laid upon her, without any choice or agency of her own, grew into something very much like sin—dark, painful, and bitter. Yet how to throw it off? There was the difficulty.

On ascending the stairs to her own room, she stopped on tip-toe at the door or her aunt's chamber. A strong impulse took possession of her to go in, and tell all to this tenderest and best of friends. She applied her ear to the door, and listened. Had any sound of movement or wakefulness been there, it is more than probable she would have entered, and unburdened her mind of its great load; but all was still. Her aunt was weary, she said, when she retired to rest. It would be cruel to awake and agitate her now. The morning would do just as well for her purpose. She would take a night to think what it was best to do, and on the morrow she would act.



CHAPTER XVI.

A meek idolater, she bowed
Before a glorious image then;
And now her tears of anguish flowed
To find him but like other men.

On the morning after her interview with Henry Linden, Catherine Clifton rose early, with the feeling that she had a clear course before her. Mystery and deception were things foreign to her nature and repugnant to her tastes. First, she would write her letter to Helen, then she would show it to her aunt, and tell her everything. There was very little in reality to tell; but what she knew herself, her aunt should be made acquainted with.

In the early morning light Catherine began to write her letter. It was very difficult; for, from some impetuous words which had burst from Henry's lips, she almost feared the shock to his temper and feelings might be too serious for any conduct of her sister's now to repair. Still it appeared to her the wisest plan to set down the excitement of the past evening as a mere temporary fit of vexation; and she entertained no doubt whatever but, in the course of a few hours, he would meet her in his usual manner, and perhaps he would even laugh, as he often did, at his own extravagance and folly.

So after thinking and thinking again, Catherine wrote precisely the kind of letter she would have done had this interview never taken place, had she only seen Henry under the first impression caused by her sister's letter to him, and not after it had rankled in his heart, awakening the most cruel doubts of her affection, and the bitterest disappointment to his manly pride. It was easier to write such a letter, and perhaps it was all that duty demanded at a sister's hands. Henry must tell the rest himself if it ever had to be told; but Catherine did not think that at all likely. She thought the cloud would pass, and that all would be sunshine again; though still holding this conviction, as she always had done, in the secret of her heart, that if Henry Linden and her sister were to make each other happy, they must either alter very much themselves, or exercise more self-denial and more care than either party seemed likely to exercise at present.

The greater the difficulty which Catherine found in writing her letter, the stronger was her conviction that it would not only be right, but in every way desirable, to consult with her aunt on a subject which already began to wear an aspect

both serious and alarming. Hearing from the adjoining room certain sounds which indicated that Miss Clifton was about to descend to the breakfast parlour, Catherine hastened to meet her, in order that the interview might be got through as soon as possible, and confined to the privacy of her aunt's chamber. Just as she opened her own door, however, she was met by a servant who placed a note in her hand, saying that a boy had brought it but left no message, and did not wait for an answer.

Catherine retreated into her chamber with the note. It was from Henry, and she opened it with the utmost satisfaction, for "now," she said to herself, "all will be right. He has thought better this morning of what he said last night. He wants me to forget it, no doubt, and that I gladly will. But what is this? Off to Paris! What can it mean?"

Catherine read, and re-read the open note, and could scarcely convince herself that her senses served her truly. "I shall have started to Paris," were the words, "before you read this. My intention is to be absent for a week. I shall not make this communication in any other quarter, so perhaps you will be kind enough to do that for me. Dear Catherine, you have witnessed my weakness—perhaps my folly. Do not expose me. As you love me, I charge you to keep the scene of last evening entirely to yourself."

"What shall I do?" exclaimed Catherine, now even more distressed than alarmed—"what can I do?"

She stopped to collect her thoughts, then read the letter again. The breakfast bell was ringing—she would go down and tell her aunt—but the note! Had Henry only written such a note as could have been shown!—to show this was impossible, without exciting suspicion of more—much more than there really was.

The breakfast bell rang a second time before Catherine felt herself sufficiently composed to go down. She went to the glass, straightened her hair, adjusted her dress, deposited the note in a drawer, took in her hand the unsealed letter she had just written to her sister, and went down.

"You are late this morning," said Miss Clifton.

"I have been finishing my letter to

Helen," Catherine was about to say, but checked herself, and began again. "I have been writing my letter to Helen, for, to tell you the truth, dear aunt, it was not written last night—not a line of it."

Miss Clifton set down her cup of coffee untasted, and looked full into the face of her niece. It was covered with blushes. Her forehead, temples, cheek, and neck, were all one crimson hue of shame. This was more than the occasion demanded. Catherine felt it, and blushed the more from the very consciousness that this foolish trick of hers, which she had constitutionally, was giving cause for unnecessary, and perhaps injurious, suspicion.

"Perhaps you had better drink your coffee," said Miss Clifton, but still not tasting her own. "We will leave this matter a little while. I have not slept very well myself, and I do not feel my usual relish for breakfast."

Catherine sipped and tasted, but eat she could not; neither could she raise her eyes to those of her aunt, which she knew were still watching her with an earnestness that seemed to pierce through her blushes into her very soul. She had no consciousness in her mind of anything particularly wrong, and yet she felt as if a mountain weighed upon her. She wanted to disentangle herself, but could not; a net-work of perplexities bound her hand and foot, and she felt more sure every moment that nothing but a desperate plunge, nothing but telling the whole truth, would set her free. Yet how could she tell another person's secrets without dishonour? "Poor Henry!" She pitied him so much; and to whom could he unburden his heart, if not to her. Was he not her brother? He had only been foolish, passionate, strange. What was there really to tell? He had loved Helen so devotedly too—he had good cause for disappointment and vexation. He had no doubt taken this journey for the purpose of calming his own mind. He would return wiser and happier. In the meantime, she would plead earnestly with Helen, and all would be well.

While these thoughts were rapidly passing through Catherine's mind, the two ladies were breakfasting in perfect silence; and although little was eaten that morning, Miss Clifton seemed disposed to prolong

the meal to its accustomed length, in all probability wishing the servants to have no cause for remark. At last the breakfast service was dismissed, all the usual adjustments with regard to order were made in the room, and Catherine sat, still silent, like one who is awaiting a fearful doom.

"Now Catherine," said her aunt, "suppose we go up into my dressing-room; the servants will not be about for some time yet."

Catherine obeyed; she blushed no longer, but looked unusually pale.

"Sit down," said Miss Clifton, when they had reached the dressing-room. Catherine again obeyed, and for some time not a word was spoken.

"I believe," said Miss Clifton, finding that she might wait in vain for her niece to begin,—“I believe I am a person very inapt at dealing with cases like the present, having always so nervous and painful an apprehension of intruding, further than is desired, upon other people's matters. Even now, I would gladly be excused, only I feel this, Catherine, that if you are to remain beneath my roof, if I am to be your aunt, and you my niece, there must come nothing between us of a mysterious nature; still less must there be anything like deception. If I am anything to you, Catherine, I am a friend—if I am nothing, I cannot help it; but in that case you must return home.”

"Aunt—my dear aunt!" Catherine began to say, but she could not utter another word. A violent burst of tears came to her relief, and leaning her head upon the table, she sobbed as if her heart would break.

"Come, come, my child," said Miss Clifton, always overcome by the sight of tears, "this will never do. Speak out to me, child—tell me what troubles you so much. Let us share it together, and so lighten the load."

"I would," said Catherine, "indeed I would tell you all that I know myself—indeed I wish at this moment you could look into my heart and see all for yourself—I would gladly tell you everything; but partly it is not my own to tell, and partly I do not know what it is that I have to tell."

"There is something wrong about the

young man, Henry Linden, I am afraid," said the aunt.

"Nothing wrong, exactly; but you know he was very much hurt about that letter of Helen's—hurt by her not coming here—hurt altogether, I think I may say."

"Have you any suspicion that his own feelings are changed, Catherine?"

"Indeed, aunt, you press me too closely with that question. If you will have patience and bear with me a little while, I will tell you everything that I really know, indeed I will. As a pledge of this, I will tell you I have this morning received a note from Henry, and that he has left London for Paris."

"Already?"

"Yes, already."

"Did you know of this last night?"

"Not at all."

"Does he give any reason for going, in his note?"

"No, none."

"Can you gather from the note what his reasons are?"

"No."

"Have you the note by you?"

"I left it in my desk."

Catherine tried with all her might to speak, and to bear this questioning without the betrayal of any emotion beyond an ordinary amount of anxiety; but anxiety does not usually call up blushes to the cheek; and yet blushes would come to hers, and looks of embarrassment which gave her countenance altogether quite an unwonted appearance, exciting suspicions on the part of her aunt who watched her narrowly, and with feelings not the most favourable, nor yet altogether just.

Miss Clifton was not accustomed to entertain such. She was not accustomed to this kind of questioning either, and finding that she made little out, and failed to elicit the whole truth, freely and frankly told, she gave the matter up with a deep sigh, and a look of anxious sorrow, more painful for Catherine to witness than the most angry expression would have been.

"Well," thought Catherine, "there is no help for it, at present;" but as she saw her aunt about to turn silently away, she ventured say, "Would you like to see my letter to Helen, dear aunt? it is quite at your service."

"As you please, child," said Miss Clifton; "if you wish it, I can look at the letter, but I desire to avoid being too busy in these matters."

Catherine unfolded the letter, and placed it before her aunt; saying, as she did so, "I do wish you to read it, dear aunt. I can have no secrets with Helen that you may not know."

"Only with Helen's lover," said Miss Clifton, rather sharply.

Catherine blushed again, and tried to smile, as if the words had been spoken in jest; but the smile would not come, only the blush; and this remark made her feel even more uncomfortable than before.

"I have no secrets with Helen's lover," she said.

"But may not he have secrets with you?" asked the elder lady. "Oh, Catherine," she went on to say, "if there should be anything false, anything treacherous to poor Helen, going on, I know not how I should ever forgive you."

"Aunt!" exclaimed Catherine, now blushing with indignation, not shame, "if that were the case, you could forgive me sooner than I could forgive myself; in this you may indeed depend upon me, that my sister's honour is as dear to me as my own, and that I will watch it with an eye as jealous, as if I were watching for myself."

"Take care, Catherine," said Miss Clifton, "take care: that is all I have to say to you at present. Give me the letter and leave me for a little while. By the way, when do you expect that extraordinary young gentleman to return?"

"In a week," replied Catherine, "from this time."

"Very well," said her aunt; "now leave me, child."

Miss Clifton was long in reading and considering the letter; but it seemed to have met with her approval, for when she entered the parlour where Catherine was seated, she said she had folded it up with one of her own, and if Catherine had nothing to add, would send the packet off by the usual messenger.

Catherine said she had nothing, and the letters were sent. No further remark was made upon what Miss Clifton herself had added, and much as Catherine wished to know, she felt it impossible to ask.

The week upon which these two ladies now entered, proved to be one of unusual silence for them. There was on both sides a want of their accustomed freedom of communication, which no effort of theirs could restore. Both made what effort they could, and by each their failure was felt painfully. Time passes but slowly under these circumstances, and although Catherine went every day to the house, and employed herself there as well as she could for several hours at a time, still there were many left on hand, and it was very melancholy to her to sit beside one so kind and genial as her Aunt Ann usually was, and feel that a sort of wall of separation was rising up between them, and that they had now no real heart intercourse on subjects which most deeply interested them both.

Wearisome days and heavy weeks, however, pass over as well as others; and the day before Henry Linden's intended return, Catherine thought she would spend a longer time than usual at the house, would hasten the workpeople more, so that the master himself should be satisfied with the amount of work which had been accomplished in his absence. Two or three little plans of her own, too, Catherine had ventured upon, which she felt sure would give satisfaction; and these she was anxious to have in so forward a state as to produce a favourable effect on first observation.

Intent upon these plans, Catherine told her aunt that she should take a biscuit with her that day, and should not return home to dinner; and Miss Clifton, only substituting a sandwich for a biscuit, willingly agreed to the proposal, saying it suited her quite as well, as she herself had to take her part that day in superintending some charitable institution situated at a considerable distance from her own residence.

To a disposition like Catherine Clifton's there is always a relief in trouble, and a satisfaction in perplexity, in the simple fact of being busy. On this day, in particular, the satisfaction was peculiarly welcome. Catherine had provided herself with implements of usefulness. She cared neither for the coarseness of the material, nor the roughness of the work. With black thread and a monstrous needle, she

stitched away, growing almost happy in the thought, that as nobody meant any harm, things would be sure to work round, and come right in the end. "What was there to fear?" she said to herself continually, "where all concerned possessed hearts so good and so warm? It was only a little cloud which had come amongst them; the sun would be sure to shine again brighter than ever."

In this manner Catherine fixed much of her attention upon what she was about, and stitched as busily, perhaps more so, than any of the workpeople around her. They were continually passing to and fro, preparing to return to their different homes, and altogether there was so much bustle in the house, and such frequent opening and closing of doors, that Catherine paid no attention to the sound of an approaching foot, which she supposed to be that of some one busy with the material she had in hand. Still intent upon her work, she was at length startled by the feeling of a hand laid upon her shoulder, and looking round, she saw Henry Linden himself.

"You start," said he, "as if you had seen a ghost."

"I should almost as soon have expected to see a ghost, as to see you," said Catherine.

"How so? Am I not in my own house? Where else should I be expected?"

"In your own house, certainly; but I thought to-morrow was the day."

"Any day is *the* day, if I choose to make it so. But come, say something more pleasant to me than that. Are you not glad to see me here again?"

"Oh! very. I am delighted."

"You do not look so. Or, if that is your expression when you are pleased, I must tell you it is a very grim kind of delight."

"But I ~~am~~ delighted—indeed I am. As a proof of my sincerity, I put aside this work which I had determined upon finishing to-day."

"Are you doing this for me, Catherine?—stitching your poor fingers to the bone for me?"

"For you and Helen. Now it is your turn to look grim, I think, Henry. What makes you frown so? Don't you like my taste?"

"Oh! the thing is well enough—nay it is better than well—charming."

"You are laughing at me now. You do not mean what you say."

"I do mean it. I mean that you have an excellent taste, Catherine, if you would only believe in it yourself, and depend upon it more."

"Well, that is really too good. I never dreamed of receiving praise of this kind from you. We will now go, if you please, and discuss these weighty matters with my aunt."

"Not now. I want half an hour's conversation with you."

"Half an hour! That is an immense time. I am sure we shall both be tired."

"You are soon tired of talking with me, Catherine; but you must, at any rate, consent to make the experiment."

"Wait one moment. I will put some coals on the fire, and light a candle, and then I will listen."

"You common-place creature! will nothing satisfy you but coals and candle? Why, look! there is the loveliest moon shining in at those uncurtained windows."

"Nevertheless, I will light my candle and stir my fire, eschewing moonlight, and poetry, and all that kind of thing, for the sake of upholstery, just now. Let the bride come home, and then we will sit and gaze at the moon."

"Catherine, I want you to be serious."

"Henry, I am serious—never more so in my life. But see, mine is but a farthing candle after all. Do you think it will throw sufficient light upon our conversation?"

"Catherine, you must hear me."

"Yes, I am all attention. Pray begin."

"I have been thinking, Catherine,—may I call you Kitty?"

"Oh yes, anything you please."

"I have been thinkig, Kitty, all the time I was away, what an excellent wife you would make."

"I have been thinking so all my life, Henry. What a pity that the only person, after myself, to take up this idea, should happen to be my brother—my sister's husband."

"Not her husband yet, Kitty. Furthermore, I have been thinking that men are often great fools in the choice they make for themselves."

"There is no subject on which I am likely to agree with you more entirely than that. Really, we go on wonderfully; what next may you have to submit to my approval?"

"That I myself have made a very foolish choice."

"Perhaps, I should have agreed with that also, six months ago; but your choice being made——"

"Is not irrevocable."

"Oh! no. I am sure you would be quite at liberty to dwell in this large house; by yourself, married to that which, perhaps, after all, you like best, and certainly will agree with best—your own shadow. I dare say you can do this even now, if you prefer it; only mind, I shall prick my fingers no more in your service; so you had better speak plainly, and tell me at once what you do wish."

"If I don't wish to marry your sister Helen at all, then will you forward my wishes?"

"Most earnestly."

"And if I do wish to marry some one else?"

"Ah! that is your own affair, not mine."

"Catherine, you *shall* be serious—you *shall* understand me. I will hold you by this slender arm until you desist from this foolery, and hear me like a true woman, as you are. Why do you tremble so?"

"Because you grasp my arm so fiercely. I am not afraid of you—no not in the least; but I will do nothing under constraint. I will neither hear you, nor answer you, unless you allow me to stand off at a sufficient distance, and to feel myself perfectly at liberty."

"There, then, you shall go. But you shall not leave the room. Surely you can anticipate what I am about to say; for unless I greatly deceive myself, the idea is not altogether strange to you."

"Go on, if you please."

"Your humour is so strange—your manner so abrupt."

"Never mind—go on."

"Well, then, for life or for death, I will speak. Catherine, I have made a terrible, a fatal mistake. I gave my heart as sincerely as ever man gave his, where it never was either understood or valued,

and never could be. It has come back to me, chilled, scorned and withered. I find myself living in sunshine, when I am near you—living in sunshine, light, and happiness. Will you take this poor rejected heart, and nurse it into life again?"

Catherine sprang from the low seat on which she had placed herself, while promising to listen. She sprang, as it seemed, up to more than her usual height, while she fixed upon Henry Linden eyes that seemed to flash with actual fire. Waving her hand, and retreating a few paces backwards, as he showed symptoms of advancing, "Is that what you wanted to say to me?" she exclaimed. And then pressing her clasped fingers across her eyes, she burst into an agony of tears, and sobbed aloud.

"Catherine, dear Catherine," said Henry, attempting to take her hand, "am I so odious to you that you will not hear me speak, even in the language of a brother?"

"Brother!" she exclaimed, while retreating as if from the approach of a serpent. "You are no brother of mine. You have violated everything sacred in the name of lover, husband, and brother too."

Losing her sorrow in her indignation, Catherine went on. "You never shall be my brother now. I would rather see my noble sister wedded to the poorest peasant. I would rather see her helping him to till the ground with her own fair hands, than behold her the mistress of this house, and your wife."

"Catherine," said Henry, "for the sake of all that is kind, and good, and holy, do moderate your wrath, and listen to reason. You yourself acknowledge that I have had a good deal to bear with in coldness, and even in contempt. You yourself have almost gone so far as to acknowledge that your sister and I could never make each other happy."

"No, no, not so far as that. If I saw from the first the ill-assorted union on which you were building such ardent hopes of felicity, I still believed you had both such goodness of heart, high principle, and correctness of feeling, that, with God's blessing, all would be well. I thought you would have trials—unavoidable trials, in, and from each other, because you are so different; but I thought

that these very trials would probably be the means of improving both your characters, and making you more united and more happy in the end. If I had not thought this, nay, from my very soul believed it, and tried to believe it more and more, do you think I would not have interfered in some way or other to prevent this connection taking place? Oh! my beautiful, my honoured sister, my noble Helen! and must this humiliation fall on you? I cannot bear it, Henry Linden, indeed I cannot!"

Catherine sat down upon the ground, in the attitude of one who would willingly heap ashes upon her own head, and again wept bitterly.

Henry was far from being prepared for this amount of feeling, or, indeed, for feeling of this kind at all. The intensity of the distress he had occasioned shocked him beyond measure. He had not, until this moment, felt himself in any respect a guilty man. That he was an injured man, was the only conviction he had borne about with him; and from Catherine's general behaviour, her kindness, her sympathy, and the many efforts she made to supply by her own tenderness and consideration all that was wanting on the part of her sister; from all her kind looks, and words, and acts of willing service, so lavishly bestowed, he had persuaded himself that her own heart and affections were, in a great measure, prepared for the confession he had at last ventured to make. As to the right and wrong of the matter,—as to the principle involved, that consideration came only when he witnessed the effect which his daring avowal had produced upon one who was not accustomed to be overwhelmed by distress, because she had never, until now, known the real bitterness of that sorrow whose deepest pang arises from a sense of wrong.

"My poor, poor Helen!" said Catherine, in a low, moaning tone, as she rocked herself to and fro, still seated on the ground, with her head bent forward, and her face covered with her hands. "My poor Helen! what shall I do for you now?"

Henry leaned against the mantel-piece, watching this picture of distress. He attempted no more to approach where his presence seemed so unwelcome. He felt,

and felt truly, that he had built up a wall of separation betwixt himself and this,—the kindest of sisters, the most faithful of friends. At last, unable longer to endure his own feelings, he exclaimed, in a tone of utter despondency, "Speak to me, Catherine; for Heaven's sake, speak to me!"

Catherine raised her head,—“I am thinking,” she said, “what to do.”

Henry felt a ray of comfort in these words. If help was to be expected from any human being, he knew from whom it would come.

“I am thinking what to do,” Catherine repeated.

“Bless you for that thought!” Henry said meekly, and with a faltering in his voice, which told her that his turn was now come for anguish inexpressible.

Catherine looked up into his face. It was averted now, and the features were all working with that terrible struggle which manly pride sustains before it yields to the strong mastery of grief.

This was more difficult than all for Catherine to bear, and yet she would rather have seen him thus than as he had appeared to her before,—exulting, vain, and false. A new strength seemed to nerve her for a time in proportion as she became sensible of his weakness.

“Henry,” she said, springing to her feet, “we must not linger here. There is much to be done. Let us meet it bravely—let us act now as if the eye of God was upon us.”

Henry shook his head. It was difficult for him to take courage at such a moment. She must help him, plan for him, lift him out of the deep waters into which he had plunged himself. “No, no,” he said to himself, “I have now no longer any claim upon her. She has said truly, I am no brother of hers. I am nothing to her now but a horror and a shame!”

“Henry,” said Catherine, approaching nearer to him, for she *could* approach him now, “Henry, let us be mutually honest and transparent with each other.”

“I have never been anything else with you,” he replied. “I have been only too honest—too transparent.”

“In return, Henry, you shall read my whole heart—you *may* read it now. I want you to understand me entirely, in

order that what I may yet have to do with you, and for you, may admit of no possible misconstruction."

"For me? did you say, Catherine?"

"Yes, for you,—even yet I will work for you, if I can do you any good."

"Oh, Catherine!"

"Let me explain all to you."

"Yes. Go on; only be a little merciful. You see how weak I am; you see how despicable; and now, when I tell you that I loathe and abhor myself, will you let that stand for your loathing, and so spare me a little the expression of your contempt!"

"I will, so far as truth permits; but I fear I shall be under the painful necessity of saying some things that you will not like."

"Oh! never mind that, only say them as gently as you can."

"That I will promise you."

"Go on then."

"First then, Henry, I remember a time, a very short time it was, and a very happy time to me, before you had begun to think of Helen as your wife. You were very kind then to a plain little girl who often walked in your shadow, preferring that to sunshine elsewhere. The heart of that little girl was very true to you, Henry, and it was very tender then. Her young imagination had received no impression so glorious as that which she fancied shone out from your character,—you were her hero, then, her good, her beautiful. Her beloved you might have been, but she soon saw that you looked elsewhere when you looked admiringly. Your own fitful humour now and then drew the plain girl to you as a plaything, but your affections reached higher, as well they might. The little girl bowed her head and submitted; she did not even murmur, only sometimes, her plain face cost her a double pang, when she saw how happy the beauty of another seemed to make you. I tell you the plain girl never murmured; it was all right, and she felt it so. I think you will do her the justice to acknowledge that she claimed nothing from you; never obtruded herself, but quietly fell back and was content to be forgotten. More, however, than this was required of her; she had to rejoice with her sister in your devoted love, and she did rejoice. Your mutual affection be-

came a sacred and holy thing with her. She would not have disturbed it, she would not have touched it with unhallowed hands, if she could. You were to her like two happy and hopeful mariners setting forth together for life or for death upon an untried and uncertain sea. She helped you to trim your boat, to make ready your sails, to push it off from the shore. She watched the winds for you, prayed that they might be propitious, bid you God speed, and became happy and hopeful herself.

"Still, Henry, though true to her sister, the heart of the plain girl was almost equally true to you. Still you were a kind of hero to her—a person set apart, and not like other people. In all her feelings for you she was womanly, tender, and true; but she was still safe, for she delighted in nothing so much as the thought that you were her brother. You know the rest; but you do not know, and no words can tell you, what it has been to this true heart to find its hero but a common man,—a mean, false man. Yes; I do not say the words reproachfully. I only say them because truth demands that they should be said; and I say them because I want you clearly to understand how it was no mean affection which I cherished in my soul for you. No, I loved your better—higher self,—I loved your honour—your unsullied truth,—I loved your faithful love for my sister; and when I saw that tried, and tried severely, oh! how I did love and pity you, because I still believed you honourable and true. Now, now, when you can talk to me as you have done, even before you have dis-entangled yourself from the most solemn engagement with my own sister—now, my hero has indeed fallen, and to me he can never rise again,—I say, to me. He may become more excellent in himself, and more admired by others; but to me he can never be the same. No, Henry Linden, I might travel with you over the whole habitable globe; I might admire with you the sun's setting, and moon's uprising; I might share with you danger and sorrow, or I might exult with you in glory and joy; but to the day of my death you would be to me no more than a common person—a mean, false man.

"Now, then, command my utmost services. They shall be yours for my sister's sake, even more than your own."



CHAPTER XVII.

Sees she no shadow standing there
Amid her wealth of flowing hair?
No shade upon the mirror's face
Of clouds that gather up apace?

We call it a realization of human life when we only bear its sorrows; but no one knows the reality of suffering until they have also borne for themselves, or for others, the injury which human guilt or even human waywardness is capable of inflicting. Human caprice and fickleness, too, may have their share, and a cruel share it often is, in filling up the measure of that experience which constitutes the true discipline of life, and as such, its reality.

Catherine Clifton had never tasted this cup before. She had now to drink its dregs, and very bitter and unpalatable they were to her unaccustomed lips. What to do remained still to be the great question with her; for her natural temperament was active, prompt, and energetic. In the present instance, however, all power of action seemed paralyzed; and yet something must be done. There was no help, and no satisfaction to be expected from the quarter whence had come this sudden and alarming overthrow

of every hope. Communing with her own thoughts, therefore,—if indeed, while driven to such extremity, any one could be said to think, Catherine still sat on her low seat rocking herself, like one who tries in vain to still some gnawing and irremediable agony; until at last she came to the conclusion, that as she must act, so she must speak; and, repugnant as the duty was, she forced herself to say, "The question now is what to do?"

There was no answer. Catherine looked up full into the face of that false fickle man, and he quailed beneath her glance; but still she looked, for she was determined to elicit something which might help her in deciding what immediate steps to take.

"It is absolutely necessary that we should act together," she said. "Tell me what you intend to do, or what you think would be best for all?"

Henry Linden spoke at last; but the effort cost him so much pain, that he endeavoured to conceal it under his accustomed flippancy, as he said, "Oh! I suppose everything must go on as it was before."

"What?"

"As no one knows of this stupid affair but yourself——"

"You don't mean that you are going to marry Helen, now?"

"Why, what else can I do?"

"Anything but that. Do what you please. I will take care of my sister. You go your own way."

"Do you mean, then, that everything shall be broken off?"

"Everything—not a shred of connection left to hold you together."

"How?"

"That is just what we have to decide upon, now; for after this hour, I hope and trust the subject will never be discussed between us again."

"I hope not, either. But what do you advise?"

"Let me see. It will be well to choose the most creditable course, so far as any choice is ours."

"I see one great difficulty."

"What is that?—speak out."

"It is not easy to speak on such a subject, and yet I must. I am not mercenary, Catherine. I think you will give me credit for that."

"Yes, that I will—credit for all that you really deserve, and the charge of being mercenary I am sure you do not."

"Well, then, if the connection should be thought to have been given up by me, it will be surmised that the reason was the alteration in the circumstances of your family—an idea perfectly abhorrent to my feelings."

"I understand—my sister's delicacy, too, would be implicated. Let me see—I wonder whether I could so manage as that Helen herself should be brought to propose that the engagement should be broken off. Perhaps I could. Leave this to me, then."

"But you will take care of Helen's dignity—her honour——"

"Ah! you may well leave *that* to me. I will stand by my sister like a rock. I would shield her honour with my life."

"Then perhaps no one need know this but Helen and yourself?"

"And my aunt."

"Miss Clifton, do you mean?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Impossible!"

"Nothing of the kind. I tell you she

must know. I shall make her acquainted with everything."

"That is too shocking—I can never see her again."

"I don't see it at all necessary that you should."

"Why, no: I am about to travel."

"And this house?"

"I wish the house was at the bottom of the sea."

"Oh! you can find somebody to take it off your hands, no doubt."

"Some agent I dare say will do that business for me."

"And you will travel?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Soon?"

"I shall set off to-morrow, or to-day."

"Not quite so fast, if you please. Remember what we said about my sister. You must wait, at all events, until I can write to you from home. There I will be to-morrow. You must keep on the spot, and excite no remarks, until you hear from me. It must be Helen's doing, not yours—remember that. Whatever else you may forget, whatever else you may neglect, that one condition must be fulfilled."

"It shall, I promise you."

With these words the two parted after their strange interview, and no one, to see them walk out of the house, shake hands, and bid each other good bye in familiar and friendly tones, would have imagined for a moment what had been the nature of their communications, or what subjects had occupied their attention during the last hour. Each went their separate way, the gentleman to prepare in secret for his own journey, the lady to prepare for hers—the man to enjoy himself, and to forget all that was troublesome or painful to remember; the woman to brave the misery, whatever it might be—to meet as best she might, and to help others to meet, the consequences of his caprice and folly.

Catherine Clifton felt the duty which rested upon her to be so weighty and momentous, that she lost no time in communicating to her aunt all the complicated and perplexing circumstances which had marked the history of the last few days with indelible characters. So far it was a relief to her own mind to unburden it of this heavy load; but it was still more so to take the advice of this faithful and

judicious friend as to the best method of acting under present circumstances.

Catherine's first consideration had been that a great duty must be done; her next was how to do it. This was indeed a puzzling question; all questions are where the right and the wrong are woven into an intricate and entangled web. In the present instance the wrong was not so bad as to render public exposure desirable. It was better for all parties that the worst should not be known. And yet, how to make the case strong enough to bring about the desired results, Catherine did not know, unless she placed the conduct of her sister's lover in such a light as to render it altogether hateful in her eyes. Then there was her sister's honour to protect, her delicacy to shield, and, lastly, there was her own character to preserve from all injurious suspicion. Not that she cared so much to defend herself merely for her own sake, but she knew that the worst thing which could happen between Helen and herself would be the creeping in of a suspicion, however slight, that she had not acted faithfully a sister's part.

All these thoughts rushed crowding into her heart and brain as she journeyed on in silence; and each seemed to grow more vivid and more painful as she drew near her home. She had not written to announce her coming; there had been no time for that. So they would meet her with pleased surprise, little dreaming what a messenger of misery and shame she was. Shame, indeed, Catherine felt it to be to herself even more than her sister. Helen's position in the affair was dignified and noble in comparison with hers. She covered her face with her hands as she thought of this. "I can never tell Helen this," she said to herself—"no never. It would feel like a brand of fire between us to the end of our lives. Why should I tell her or any one? It is my own affair altogether; and if I can manage to break off the connection, it will be better for all parties that this should go with me untold to my grave."

There was great consolation to Catherine in the idea that duty did not demand of her a full disclosure of this humiliating secret. It could do Helen no good to know it—it might do her much harm, and that for years to come; for she was one

whose delicacy could not be touched without her feelings being severely wounded. Catherine knew this. She knew the calm outward dignity with which Helen would receive such a communication; but she knew also how it would rankle in her heart through many a silent hour.

As Catherine approached her father's door, a sense of desperation seemed to take possession of her. She could not retract or recede—she must go on. Her little bark was nearing the rapids—she must dash through in one way or another.

It had been Catherine's wish, all the way that she travelled, that by some lucky chance or other she might see her sister alone before meeting either of her parents; but when the servant who opened the door informed her that Mr. and Mrs. Clifton had gone out to walk, and that Miss Clifton was upstairs in her own room, Catherine almost wished there had been a hundred people in the house, rather than she should be compelled to the necessity of meeting her sister in this manner at once and alone.

With beating heart and trembling steps, however, Catherine ascended the stairs. She had dismissed the servant, and said she would announce herself. Gently tapping at her sister's door, Catherine was answered by a cheerful "Come in." She opened the door. Helen, who doubted not it was the servant who usually attended upon her, went on with her own occupation, which was no other than that of combing out her rich and beautiful hair before the glass. With one white hand she grasped the thick luxuriant mass, while the other held the comb with which it was about to be secured. Her tall and noble figure stood at its full height, robed in a kind of dressing-gown, which gave her somewhat the appearance of a Roman matron. Suddenly she turned round before the comb had been secured, for it seemed to her that the servant was slow to deliver her message, whatever it might be. A slight scream of delighted recognition burst from her lips as she saw who it was, and letting down her hair, which fell in silken waves around her shoulders, she threw her arms about her sister with a more lively welcome than she was accustomed to express.

All this was very difficult for Catherine.

to bear. She had been much struck with her sister's surpassing loveliness; but she was still more so with her warmth of expression, and with the evident delight it gave her to see Catherine again. Her whole manner indicated that she had been wanting her—wanting some one perhaps to whose sympathising ear she could unburden her full heart. Perhaps, Catherine thought within herself, she had been relenting—softening towards *him*. If this be the case, what *shall* I do?

"I know what you have come about," said Helen.

"What?" asked Catherine, trembling from head to foot.

"It is that house," replied her sister, laughing. "Poor Henry! I am afraid he is very much vexed with me; but really I cannot go along with his ecstasies about a house. Does he seem very angry, Catherine—how is he?"

"He has been away for some time," said Catherine. "I have not seen much of him."

"Away?"

"Yes, in Paris."

"In Paris? I never heard a word of it."

"I was going to tell you, as soon as I heard from you. But, Helen, you never wrote."

"Why, I found it very difficult to write so as to please you both, and after that long lecture of yours, Kitty, I thought I would be silent for a while."

"But you *should* have written, Helen, and you should have paid more attention to the little matters connected with the house. Oh! there has been a world of mischief done, unconsciously."

"To tell you the whole truth, Kitty, I thought I had some cause to feel hurt—indeed, rather more cause than Henry had. Look at our circumstances—at my poor father, and my mother. Do you know, Henry never once mentioned them in any of his last three letters. From the first, he spoke of our misfortunes so slightly, that I had no reason to think he cared in the least: and I confess I took this to heart a good deal. I had a thought, too—I don't mind mentioning it to you—I could not hint such a thing to him—I had a thought, that perhaps he would offer to assist my father a little. We should not

have accepted his assistance you know, but I did think he would offer. And here was this house taking hundreds upon hundreds to furnish it. Why, Kitty, I would rather have gone into a log-but with a man who had the heart to help my father, than into a palace with one who had not. But it is all over now. I am not really angry with Henry. He has been to Paris, you say?"

"I am afraid, Helen, it is not all over in the way you think."

"Is Henry so unforgiving, then?"

"You have never asked his forgiveness. There has been nothing on your part but cold, dead silence."

"Oh! I wrote to him scarcely ten days ago."

"And that letter did all the mischief. It was worse than nothing."

"Because I did not write about the house and the furniture, I suppose?"

"You know that what he was doing was all for you."

"And for himself."

"Do not laugh, Helen. I cannot bear to hear you laugh now."

"I tell you it is all over, Kitty."

"And I tell you, Helen, it is not all over."

"Oh! but it soon will be. If Henry is a little selfish sometimes, his wrath is very easy to appease."

"His wrath may be, but I don't think Henry is angry now."

"What then?"

"He is hurt—grieved—alienated."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that he has felt deeply your general conduct towards him lately."

"My conduct! What can you mean?"

"I mean that the first blow was given by your refusal to meet him in London. He thought, from that little fact, that you could not love him as he was loving you."

"Nonsense!"

"It was not nonsense to him. It made a deep and painful impression, which other circumstances confirmed; and, Helen, I am very sorry to be obliged to tell you so, but I have come here on purpose to advise you to give Henry up altogether. I am sure you will never be happy with him nor he with you."

"What has he been doing, Catherine? What have you found out?"

"Oh! don't think unkindly of him,

Helen. I have found out nothing but that you have wounded his feelings, and humbled his pride in these little things, as you call them, until his affections have become alienated from you. He first came to the conclusion—and, Helen, he did this most unwillingly—to that I can bear witness—he first came to the conclusion that you did not love him; and then, Helen, he began to love you less, until now—now, it is my decided opinion, that you would do well to give the matter up altogether.”

Catherine saw, while she was speaking, that the flush in her sister's face grew deeper and deeper, and that an expression in her eye betrayed either injured dignity or wounded feeling—perhaps both; but it must come, and the sooner the better now.

“Perhaps you will explain yourself a little farther,” said Helen.

“I don't know,” said Catherine, “what I have more to say, than that I am sure there is a state of feeling between you and Henry, which renders it impossible now that you should be happy together.”

“Not on my part, Catherine,” Helen exclaimed, with some warmth; “not on my part, I do assure you; if ever I loved Henry at all, I love him now. I meant no harm. I was only teased, and annoyed by his behaviour.”

“But, dear Helen, you showed too much that you were so. You wounded his self-love. Men cannot bear that; you showed indifference, too, about what concerned you both together in your most intimate relation as man and wife; that wounded his tenderness, his affection for you.”

“But, Catherine, I never dreamed it would come to this!”

“It has come to this, dear Helen; and how much better now than afterwards. Only think,—you might have discovered, after you were married, that you were not suited, and could not make each other happy.”

“I would have tried to make Henry happy,—indeed I would.”

“I know you would have tried, dearest,—in your way, you would have tried; but still it might not have been his way; and he might not have been a bit the happier for all your efforts.”

“Where is he now, Catherine?”

“In London.”

“Do you think I could see him?”

“I think it would be much better that you should not.”

“Only to explain myself a little,—only to convince him that I meant no unkindness in what I said or did.”

“Oh, he has nothing against you, Helen.”

“Tell me more, Catherine; tell me all you know. I cannot understand what is the matter, nor what has happened.”

“One thing you do know, Helen; that Henry is constitutionally volatile and impetuous. He is also fickle; such natures, I believe, always are.”

“I know that his love for me was of a passionate absorbing nature, that often went beyond all bounds of reason.”

“Well, then, such love, Helen, when it meets with a check is, I believe, always the first to give away; it requires a great deal of training to keep it always the same. It is the very nature of it to expend itself; it can bear no shock, no disappointment. You are so firm and true, dear Helen, you were not fitted for a lover like this.”

“Then, in plain words, Catherine, you think that Henry's love for me has given way?”

“I do.”

“You are quite sure of it?”

“I am. Not his esteem, not his respect; only the passionate love you describe has died out; and no explanation, no interview with you could revive it.”

“Mind what you say to me, Catherine; my whole future life must receive its tone from the coloring you give to it this moment.”

“I know that. I knew it before I came. It is not a mere fancy which has driven me to this necessity. It is the truth that I tell you, Helen, indeed it is.”

“That is enough; you need say no more.”

“Something must be done, Helen.”

“Yes, something must be done. My poor mother! what will she say?”

Helen sank down into a chair, covered her face with her hands, and wept bitterly.

Catherine was not altogether sorry to see these tears, because she felt that such an outburst of womanly feeling must necessarily come; and so long as her sister pursued her inquiries into the facts of the

case, there could be no satisfaction for either of them. The humiliating truth once admitted, Helen was not very likely to trouble herself with the details of the case. It was enough for her that Henry Linden was no longer her lover; the sooner they were separated entirely and for ever, the better. The thought of her mother, however, still kept Helen weeping, for she knew the disappointment to her would be severe, as it touched the worldly circumstances of the family. She felt, too, the mortification of being exposed to idle and vulgar remarks, more, perhaps, than she would have confessed that she felt it, even to her sister. By degrees, however, her violent weeping began to abate, and Catherine took heart to speak again.

"Something must be done," she said, "and I think, Helen, the more quietly we manage this matter the better."

"Certainly," said Helen; "I wish it could be so managed, that I need have nothing whatever to do with it."

"Perhaps it can," said Catherine, taking still more courage; for she saw, and had seen all the while, that the shock which her intelligence necessarily communicated reached not to the deepest portion of her sister's heart; and hence she feared not but that the wound would soon be healed. "Helen," she said to herself, "may think she loved Henry, because she has never known any stronger attachment. She does not know what love is; but this stroke will pass; this blast will blow over. I see that plainly enough, when once we shall have arranged it, so that very little shall be known beyond ourselves. My mother will be the most difficult to pacify; and yet perhaps the prospect of keeping Helen always near her will satisfy even her."

While these thoughts flowed rapidly through the mind of one sister, the other sobbed away her sorrow, until it seemed to have expended itself. She then wiped her eyes, and gathering up her fallen tresses, began again to speak in tones of something like composure. There was no deep heart wound: that was plain enough; for in that case there would have been fresh outbursts of tenderness, and the after thoughts would have been more laden with agony than those which occurred first.

It was not so with Helen Clifton. Rising up with her accustomed dignity of look and manner, she turned a placid look upon her sister, and said, while the tears were still wet upon her cheek, "Catherine, I place myself in your hands. Do not require of me anything impossible, and I will submit implicitly to your guidance."

"Bless you, dear Helen," said Catherine, and throwing her arms around her sister's neck, she kissed off the tears from her cheek; not, however, without leaving her own there instead. "Bless you, dear Helen," she repeated; "in all this, God will help you through unharmed, and I will help you too, in my humble way, if He will give me wisdom to know what is best, and strength to do it."

The sisters remained for some time locked in the tenderest embrace they had, perhaps, ever shared together. Helen was the first to rouse herself now. "I put myself," she said again, "in your hands Catherine; but don't, dear, don't ask me to write to—"

"No, no" said Catherine, "I will do all that myself; but I must do it, you know, with your sanction."

"And Grace—will you see Grace for me?"

"Yes, I will do all that also."

"But my mother—what shall we do about her?"

"Why, I have been hoping, Helen, even that may not be so difficult as you suppose. You know she will have the comfort of keeping you near her."

"Yes, and she has grown very dependent lately, much more so than she used to be. Oh! how one thing crowds upon another; there is old Mr. Linden to be thought of. What shall be done about him?"

"Do you know, Helen, I have for some time had my own suspicions that Mr. Linden is rather a selfish and mercenary old gentleman, and that since he has known of our poverty, he has not been particularly pleased with the idea of being so nearly related to us?"

"Well, now you mention it, I do think there has been a difference in his behaviour to my father and mother. As for me, I have not troubled him much, for you know the least want of respect towards

them is an unpardonable sin with me. I do think there has been a difference, and I think, too, that Grace has been aware of it."

"You may depend upon it he won't lay the matter much to heart, nor blaze it much abroad, either."

"Well, then it all comes back to our own little circle at home. I do believe they are returning from their walk. Oh! how shall I meet my mother, Catherine?"

"Shut yourself up in your own room, Helen, for a little while. I will meet my mother. Let us wait until my father has gone to rest. I think I hear them going into the drawing-room. As soon as my mother comes upstairs to take off her bonnet, I will go to her. Keep yourself quiet, Helen. Here, lie down on this couch. There now, be still. All will be well in the end, dear Helen,—all will be well, I am quite sure, if we only do right."

The sisters listened attentively. Presently they heard a slow and weary step ascending the stairs. The servants, they felt sure, would not tell Mrs. Clifton that Catherine had arrived, so long as their master was within hearing, because they had strict orders never to say or do anything that would surprise or disturb him; and the sisters guessed, too, by the sound of the step treading so languidly, and slowly, that their mother was only feeling her accustomed weariness and anxiety, which had lately settled into a listless melancholy, very sad to behold in one who had formerly been one of the most hopeful of human beings. Perhaps Mrs. Clifton was hopeful still, for she had still before her a future that was radiant in colours of her own creating; but she was greatly aged in appearance, and her daughters sometimes thought, worn out both in body and mind. Constant attendance upon an invalid like Mr. Clifton will generally produce this effect in the course of time, however elastic may originally have been the spirit and the frame upon which the burden was imposed.

"But," said Helen, still listening to her mother's movements, "what are we to say? We shall be questioned on every hand, and my mother especially will feel that she has a right to know all."

"True, Helen," replied her sister; "but to say mother alone is it at all necessary to tell all."

"And not to Grace?" Helen asked.

"Ah! I had forgotten that. Well, as I said before, I will manage all with Grace."

"I am so taken by surprise," said Helen, smoothing away the hair from her beautiful brow, "so confused and confounded, that I do not think I know distinctly what to say, myself."

"Say," replied Catherine, "that through me you have broken off your engagement, and do not intend to marry; and when asked, as you will be, of course, what are your reasons, say that you had cause to believe Henry's feelings for you were changed, and that you knew you should never be happy together. Just say this, Helen; nobody will question you, of course. But you must put a good face upon the matter, and let it be all your own doing. I will write the letter so soon as I have seen my mother. Perhaps I had better go to her alone. What do you think?"

"Oh! go by yourself, dear Catherine, I implore you," said Helen. "Say everything you can to soothe and to soften what you have to tell. Perhaps, after all, it may not be so bad as I fear. I will wait here until you have done this sad duty, and then we will talk about the letter."

Under any circumstances less serious, Catherine would have felt inclined to smile at the manner in which her sister was taking this trouble altogether. To some, perhaps to herself, she thought how different the shock would have been; but while she wondered, she rejoiced with silent satisfaction; for she saw plainly that for all the duties, and it might be for the pleasures of her future life, Helen would remain as completely heart-whole as if she had never fancied that she loved.

"Better," said Catherine to herself, "better a thousand times that she should remain Helen Clifton still, than marry upon so cold and meagre an attachment as this."

Catherine was right, so far as Henry Linden was concerned; but there were other and very different men in the world, and many would have found no want in a sensible and lovely woman like Helen, who would probably have discharged her absolute duties as a wife with more entireness, punctuality, and method, than some

who have more heart in the matter ; and who, in the intercourse of married life, pay less regard to the letter and the law, than to the spirit and the life.

"Better so," said Catherine to herself, again, as she tapped gently at her mother's door. Not doubting it was Helen who stood at the door, Mrs. Clifton invited her to come in, and Catherine entered.

A cry of very natural surprise escaped from Mrs. Clifton's lips, and she immediately began to question her daughter upon what had brought her home without any previous announcement. Before Catherine had time to answer this question—for, to tell the truth, she was not particularly ready with her answer,—Mrs. Clifton went on to other matters, such as the preparation of the house, and all that endless variety of interesting affairs with which mothers, whose daughters are about to be married, are accustomed to busy themselves.

This was very difficult for Catherine to bear with composure, and she tried to break off the thread of interest, so as to join it on elsewhere. But the thread could not be broken by gentle means, and Catherine was obliged at last to say, "Stop, dear mother ; it is not the house I have come to talk to you about."

"What then ?" asked Mrs. Clifton, with a surprised and anxious look.

Catherine placed herself a little behind her mother, who was seated on a low chair, and, clasping her arms round her neck, stooped forward until her cheek was pressed against her mother's. Then she began to speak, almost breathlessly at first, partly from the fear of losing herself in the entangled web she had to unfold, so far as to say what was not exactly true, and partly from the dread of inflicting pain, where there was already enough, and too much, to bear.

Catherine, however, got on wonderfully well, still holding her mother so closely, that her own face was kept from any chance of observation ; and in this manner she had gone on nearly to the end of her sad story, trying, however, her very best to make it not seem sad at all, when she became sensible that hot tears were falling thick and fast upon her hands, which were clasped across her mother's bosom.

This silent grief was worse than all to

her. "Mother, dear mother," said Catherine, "it is not so bad. We shall have Helen still amongst us, you know. Is not that a great happiness to think of ?"

Catherine went on for some time, endeavouring to call up all sorts of pleasant pictures to dwell upon, all sorts of consolation to lay to the poor sufferer's wounded heart, until at length her mother began to sob aloud. Even that was better than her silent grief, for then she began to speak too, as well as she could, for her heavy and uncontrollable weeping. What she had to say, however, was not easy to combat with any of Catherine's arguments ; for the great burden of her sorrow seemed to be the shame, the disgrace, the general downfall of her family. In vain her daughter reasoned with her, that where there was no sin, there could be no disgrace, nor need for any bitter sorrow ; Mrs. Clifton had been accustomed to look with a worldly eye upon all such matters, and she knew perfectly well, that there was already, and would be, infinite disgrace to them as a family—that is, as the world counts disgrace—in the circumstances which now seemed to be accumulating upon them.

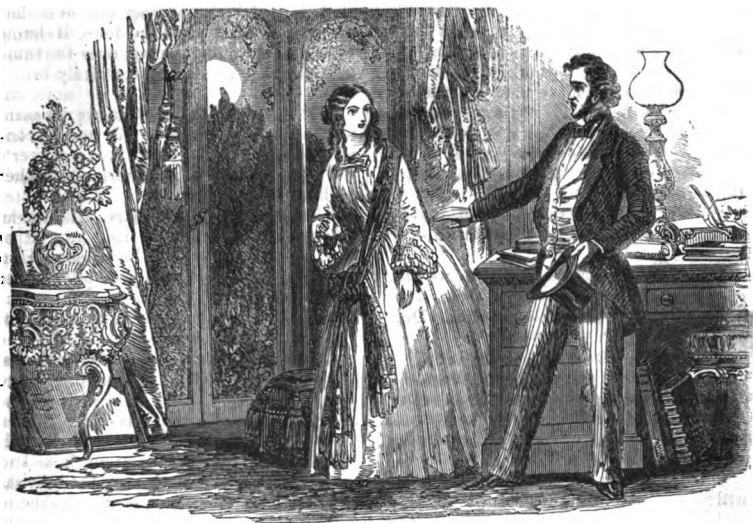
"But we shall have Helen still," Catherine ventured to repeat. "We shall be altogether, and surely we can make our own happiness."

"You forget," said Mrs. Clifton, "how poor we are."

"Oh, no, I don't forget that," said Catherine. "We shall be rich in having Helen with us. Helen and I together will be so useful and so economical, you cannot think. We will keep only one servant, perhaps a little girl, or an old woman ; and I am quite sure you will never feel the want of more servants, if Helen and I do our best."

Mrs. Clifton shook her head. She did not like the tone which her daughter's arguments were taking. A painful alternative, or a humiliating proposal often looks more difficult than it really is ; and in the present instance, the thing was pronounced to be impossible.

"Impossible !" Mrs. Clifton repeated, with a look of authority which was evidently intended to prevent all further remonstrance.



CHAPTER XVIII.

She stood before him like a lovely flower
Unconscious of the coming storm, that soon
Would burst upon her fragile head, and lay
Her beauty prostrate.

THERE are no people so difficult to reason with, or to persuade, as those who pride themselves upon their knowledge of the future. All anticipated events took such deep root in Mrs. Clifton's mind that, to move them from their foundation, or to exchange them for other events, required both energy and nice management. Catherine was mistress of both. She returned to her first position, and maintained that her father's household would really be more comfortably conducted by her sister and herself, with the assistance of one servant only, than if they had more.

"You have no idea," she said, in her naturally playful manner, "how useful Helen and I can make ourselves. You will have one daughter for exhibition—the other for service. What could any reasonable mother wish for more?"

"No," said Mrs. Clifton, "that will never do. Mr. Clifton himself requires so much attendance."

"Well, we will attend upon him then,"

said Catherine, "nothing could be more fit for us."

"But what would people say or think of that? You know we have our credit to keep up."

"To me it seems very creditable that daughters should attend upon a sick father."

"Wheel him about in his garden-chair, for instance?"

"Yes. There is nothing I should like better, if he did not want to frequent the public promenades."

"But he does; he always will go where there is most company to be seen."

"Perhaps we could persuade him not. However, we won't discuss that now. May Helen come and talk to you herself?"

"Yes, certainly. Only stay one moment, Catherine. You remember, perhaps, what you and I once talked about together?"

"Not quite; we have talked, you know, about so many things."

"You remember the reason why I wanted you to be more attentive to your studies?"

"Oh! I do remember now—that I might go out as a governess. Well,

you like, dear mother. I will do anything that is right—at least, I will try; but I think I should make a much better nurse, or a servant, than a governess."

"How you talk, Catherine! You don't seem to have the least idea of propriety in these matters. If you went out as a governess, you know, at a distance from home, nobody would be any wiser here."

"That sounds a little hard, mother, I think, don't you?"

"Why, yes, every thing is hard, it seems to me—every thing, at least, in which we are concerned."

"Oh! don't say that, mother, we have our love for each other left, our family affection, and a great deal besides. Don't say that every thing is hard."

"But you see the necessity now, Catherine, of doing something for yourself?"

"I see the necessity of doing something, and a great deal too; but I should like it to be for you, and for my father, not for myself."

"It will be for us as well, for the family will be smaller, you know."

"Not if I should spare you a servant by remaining at home."

"You don't understand these things, Catherine."

"Well, we won't discuss them just now. Helen is waiting to come in. May I call her?"

"Yes, if you please."

Helen came instantly. Her placid countenance re-assured her mother, for she had had time to collect her scattered thoughts, and her countenance, as well as her voice and general manner, indicated a degree of calm and gentle resignation, in which was blended a slight amount of absolute pain.

"We shall do very well now," said Catherine to herself. "When Helen regains her self-possession, all will be right, and the domestic machine will go on in its accustomed way. I wonder what she will say to my going out as a governess?"

Catherine remained silent in the room while her mother and Helen exchanged a few words of affection, such as indicated that they were both feeling and thinking on the same subject. A few tears, too, were shed by both, but these were gently stayed by a few caresses of more than usual tenderness.

"I don't know what has come to us all," said Mrs. Clifton, wiping her eyes. "I don't know what you have done, Helen, or what you are doing rather, only Catherine tells me this marriage is entirely broken off."

"Well," said Helen, "you are not sorry, mother, surely, that you will now not lose me so entirely?"

"So entirely?" said Catherine to herself, "what can she mean?"

"So entirely," said Mrs. Clifton inquiringly; "I shall not lose you at all now. You will stay to be a comfort to me in my old age, and to your poor father, won't you, dear?"

"I hope I shall always be a comfort to you both," Helen replied.

Catherine looked earnestly into her sister's face; it bore traces of inward communion, of counsel held with reason, and purpose, and will. Beyond this, it bore traces of spiritual intercourse held with the Fountain of all strength and all true consolation. Catherine thought she had never seen her sister look so noble, so dignified, so almost more than human, in the higher attributes of her nature. Even in this view of her sister's character she saw how unfitted she was to be Henry Linden's wife, for he could never have understood her, nor read her noble, generous motives aright.

"We have had a great deal to plan and think about lately," said Mrs. Clifton, "in connection with you, Helen: and now that it is all taken away, I don't seem to know what to do, nor which way to look."

"You have lost your precious future," said Helen, with a faint but kind smile, which, however, soon left her face.

"My future? Oh! no," said Mrs. Clifton. "I have only to re-arrange my plans. I shall soon set all right again. But, you see, I was quite taken by surprise. It came upon me so suddenly."

Catherine thought there were other people taken by surprise besides her mother, but she still remained silent; for she thought she could read in Helen's look and manner certain indications of a kind of quiet determination, such as she knew her sister was capable of making, though in the present instance she was wholly at a loss to imagine what the nature of the determination could be.

"We have still a great deal to plan and think about," said Helen. "We have still a future, dear mother, and a great deal depends upon our looking at that future with perfect agreement amongst ourselves."

"Yes," said Mrs. Clifton rather hastily, "that is just what I have been talking about with your sister. I wish, Helen, you would help me to persuade Catherine to look at her duty in the proper light."

"What," said Helen, "is our dear little Kitty slow to see her duty, or backward to do it?"

"I am afraid she is," replied Mrs. Clifton, "in this particular instance. I wish you would reason with her, Helen. You speak more to the purpose than I do, sometimes."

"Perhaps," said Helen, with a slight inclination to smile, "perhaps you would just tell me what you think her duty is?"

"It is not a very pleasant subject," replied Mrs. Clifton; "but Catherine and I have talked about it together before now. It relates chiefly to these distressing affairs of ours—pecuniary affairs, I mean. You know, Helen, there are cases in which women—ladies, I mean—are expected to do something for themselves; and now especially—now, when it does not seem likely that you will marry, I want Catherine to turn her attention to making what I call a little independence for herself."

"And Kitty does not see this quite as you do?" Helen asked.

"No, dear," replied her mother, "she does not see it in a right way at all. She talks foolishly about our living more meanly,—as if we could live more so than we do now; about keeping only one servant, and herself doing the work of the other. Indeed, Catherine, you need not smile. You know this is all true; and a great grief it has been to me, Helen, to find your sister so unwilling to do what is right."

"You think, mother," said Helen, "that the necessity is greater for this change to be made now that I am not likely to be married?"

"Of course," Mrs. Clifton replied. "One of you must remain at home. It is quite impossible that your father should be left entirely; he wants so much amusing, walking out with, and reading to—more a great deal than I have either

strength or spirits for. We cannot be left entirely to servants, that would never do."

"Then I will tell you what shall be done," said Helen, taking her mother's passive hand in hers; but before she explained herself, looking round to her sister with an expression of countenance which said, "Be silent; let me say all that is upon my mind without interruption from you."

Catherine perfectly understood her sister's meaning; and Helen went on to say, "I will tell you what shall be done, dear mother. In the first place, you know you have become accustomed to the idea of my leaving home."

"Yes," said Mrs. Clifton; "it was very hard to bear at first, but now the only thing which reconciles me to what has happened is that we shall keep you with us always."

"Not exactly so," said Helen. "Suppose you substitute one line of duty for another. I will be the governess, mother."

"You?" exclaimed Mrs. Clifton, with astonishment almost amounting to horror. "You?" she repeated, "with your advantages of person and mind!"

"As to my advantages of person," said Helen, quietly, "you see they have done very little for me; they have only betrayed me into circumstances for which I was not fitted. And as to my advantages of mind, if I have any, you know they will be the very things I shall want as a governess."

Catherine understood her sister now. She saw plainly why that look of calm determination had sat upon her brow. She understood and admired her more than ever in her life; but she could not look at that noble form and lovely face, and connect them in idea with the fate of a governess, such as she had always imagined it to be; she was on the point of entering her protest against this plan, but a wave of her sister's hand again motioned her to be still.

"It was Catherine," exclaimed Mrs. Clifton, "who was to be the governess, if anything went wrong with our affairs. I fixed this in my own mind from the first. She was trained up and educated for it, you know."

"Yes, mother," said Helen, "but if she never took kindly to the idea, and if I do! For the sake of argument, I will say, that

if she never had the natural gifts for it, and if I have?"

"But you," said Mrs. Clifton, in a state of great bewilderment occasioned by this kind of reasoning, which was perfectly new to her, "you were to marry; and you will marry well, there can be no doubt of that, though it may not be just now."

"And poor little Kitty," said Helen, smiling, "is she never to marry? Why she has all the qualifications for a good wife, which I have not. It will all come naturally to her, but I, you see, don't understand these matters. No, no, dear mother, I shall make a much better governess than Kitty; she a much better wife than I ever could."

"She a wife?" exclaimed Mrs. Clifton. The idea was so foreign to her calculations for the future that it could not find an inch of mind to stand upon. "Kitty a wife?" she repeated. "You don't mean that she has any prospects of that kind?"

"Not at present," said Helen,—now really smiling; "but there is no reason why she should not, some time or other. She is young yet. But all this is trifling, dear mother; and I am in no trifling mood. I want you to understand me very clearly in this; that my mind is fully made up—my determination entirely fixed, that I will leave home, and try what I can do as a governess; in short, if you will not understand me, that I will look out for a situation, and take one as soon as I can."

"And Catherine?" said Mrs. Clifton, her countenance still wearing a look of strange consternation.

"One of us, you know," Helen replied, "must remain at home. Kitty has every qualification for being the home bird, and will take excellent care of the nest. These qualifications are not mine by nature. Kitty will do all this a thousand times better than I could. She will make you all cheerful and happy; and if you can consent to part with one of the servants, I am sure she will manage so that you shall never feel the loss. Come, Kitty; come and confirm what I say."

Catherine came and stood beside her mother, affectionately taking one of her hands. She had felt more disposed to smile than to be angry at all her mother had said about herself, because she knew

that it arose entirely out of the tenacity with which Mrs. Clifton always clung to a favourite plan of her own, not from any want of appreciating Catherine's services at home. That her mother should look to Helen with more esteem than to herself she could readily understand, and as readily forgive. Who, she thought, would not, if they possessed any right ideas of the real value of human character? The lessons which she had long since learned in practical matters were sufficiently soothing to her vanity to make up for any wounds it might have received; for she knew perfectly well, that whenever her mother needed the assistance of a skilful and willing hand, it was her own, and not her sister's, that was called in to her aid. Thus she could speak with perfect good-humour when she addressed her mother, saying, in a playful but affectionate manner, "You don't seem to care much about having me at home with you, mother dear. I think we had better both go out. Indeed, I have lately had very serious thoughts of learning the business of a pastry-cook."

Helen and her mother both smiled, as it was intended that they should, for Catherine wanted nothing so much as that peace and contentment, if it might not be happiness, should be restored amongst them. Altogether, she thought Mrs. Clifton was beginning to settle upon her new ideas, and even to regard them as fresh material to build plans upon. Once let her get to work in the future with these plans for her occupation, and all would be well.

"The letter!" Catherine whispered to her sister, as they stood close together: a slight cloud passed over Helen's fair face; but stooping down, she pressed a kiss upon her mother's cheek, and then left the room with Catherine, who leaned upon her arm with more affection, she believed, than anyone ever felt for a sister before.

The letter was carefully written, many attempts being made before it was finally approved. It was a painful task, and cost the writer more heartaches than she had calculated upon. "Poor Henry!" was still upon her lips—the old feeling for him still kept thrilling through her heart. It did not remain there, however, it only passed through and through, leaving be-

and fainter traces every time. Catherine consoled herself with the recollection that he was one who could not possibly suffer long about anything; and that, especially where his vanity was wounded, and his self-love annoyed, he was sure to recover pretty quickly, from even the severest blow which any human hand could inflict.

With two or three slight alterations, the letter was thoroughly approved,—and thus the light love of a summer's day was brought to its close. How many loves have died out in the same way, let the frosts of autumn and the storms of winter tell. In all such cases, it is better, infinitely better, they should die soon than late.

We must now turn to Grace Linden, who with unutterable astonishment had heard from Catherine herself the principal facts of this portion of her sister's history. Grace was wholly at a loss to conceive how such a conclusion could have been borne by either party without anguish of mind bordering on distraction; and after her first interview with Helen, she could not help saying to herself, one afternoon, as she sat alone—"How calmly some people take things, and how easily they seem to go on in their accustomed manner, under afflictions that would bring me to the grave."

So thought Grace;—and as she softly repeated these exclamations, she sat at the open window of a beautiful library, looking out upon a smooth lawn, where shrubs and plants of endless variety were grouped in order, though still with strict regard to gracefulness and beauty of effect. Though the season was late in the autumn, the air was still and close, and there had been neither rain, nor wind, nor frost, to kill the thickly-clustered gorgeous flowers which hung their glories on the drooping brow of the declining year. Innumerable roses were still there, rich both in scent and bloom; and all around, along the course of border, walk, and bed, the eye could nowhere rest without taking in a flush of splendid colour, which seemed to fill and satisfy the sight as a rich draught satisfies the taste.

It was a secluded, as well as a highly cultured spot, hemmed in on one side by green-houses, festooned by creeping plants; on the other, by ivied-walls; and

fronting that side of the house was a thick shrubbery with winding walks, which lost themselves in a more distant plantation, or led into the fields beyond. Here and there, upon the velvet lawn, stood some noble pine, with branches sweeping on the ground, or purple beech, or graceful birch; and so soft and mild the season hitherto had been—so slight the ruffling of the autumn winds, that scarcely had the leaves begun to fall, or, if they had, there were ready hands at work to prevent the slightest symptom of disorder catching the eye of those whose privilege it was to gaze upon that lovely scene.

"How some people can bear the uprooting of every thing they have built their hopes upon!" said the fair lips again. "There is Helen Clifton, for instance, moving about with all her accustomed calmness and dignity; and here is my brother Henry writing me from Venice a letter so full of interest and amusement, that I could almost fancy, if the thing were possible, he had never been happier in his life than now. Well, it is a strange world, and I suppose not the less pleasant to its inhabitants that they are so differently constituted as to be mysteries and enigmas to each other."

"I wonder now," the same lips went on to say, "whether these people who take things so easily, are really at any time so happy as I could be. If so, I could almost wish to be like them. Still, I do not know why I should wish this, having so little to fear. I ought to be very thankful, and, indeed, I am thankful, that my foundation is so secure. Once shaken, all would be gone with me. But I cannot think of it. I cannot look, even in idea, at anything so dreadful. I ought, indeed, to be thankful that my rock is one upon which I can build with safety. I like a safe character, too, in a man, even more than one possessing higher claims to be called ornamental. My brother, for instance,—amiable and delightful as he is,—I could never feel safe, were my happiness in the hands of such a man. I want certainty—I want repose. I am not strong enough, nor bold enough to cope with the difficulties which some people say are inevitable to our earthly lot. I hope they will not be inevitable to mine. I do not think they will. Life looks so beautiful

to me—so smooth—so safe. I should not think so, if I was ambitious; but when I think of earthly happiness, I only picture to myself a little country parsonage—Oh! such a lovely place!—a rustic porch, overgrown with ivy, at which the poor would always find a welcome—a hospitable board, a cheerful hearth, all snug, and warm, and ever nursed and cherished by the atmosphere of love. There is no ambition in this, surely—nothing wrong—nothing for which I need be punished or afflicted. Oh! no; if I keep humble and unselfish, surely God is so good, He will not let me suffer. I don't think I was made to suffer. I would fain hope, if it were not presumptuous to think so, that I did not need it much. At least, I may say that I do not feel rebellious. I am not conscious of murmuring, ingratitude, or discontent. I can say cheerfully, each night before I sleep, 'Thy will be done.' Oh! no, I do not think there is any cause for me to fear; God is so good."

God is so good, unquestionably, that none who put their trust in Him need fear;—but how often is this goodness extended to us in forms, and modes of dealing, which to mere human calculation look severe, and unpropitious?

Long after the lips of Grace Linden had so breathed out the secret feelings of her heart—long did she remain gazing out upon that little secluded garden, where nothing but the robin's melancholy autumn song was heard. It was not melancholy to her—nothing was melancholy, but soft, and gentle, and most peaceful. Such were the influences of Nature—such the aspect of the flowers, and trees—such the first tinge of sunset colouring which stole upon that bowery scene, making the golden tints more golden, and the bright burning red more brilliant and intense.

It was so near upon the close of day, that had Grace Linden's father found her thus breathing the outer air, he would have taken sudden alarm at such exposure; but Grace felt, even here, in perfect safety. She was so happy, too, so much at rest—so happy in herself, her circumstances, in all within, and even without, so far as filled the circle of her existence. It was not a wide circle. It did not include much besides herself, and

one other; but it was full, notwithstanding,—and rich in peace, and joy. Yes; her life was like that little garden, full of happiness, as that was full of beauty; but within that sheltered spot, there was not a single flower whose delicate petals might not any hour be withered—not a single leaf that might not any moment be shivered from its stem. All hung, as it were, suspended by a breath—all, even now, was tinted by the hectic of decay. With all, the hand of death was busy underneath. The wind was only waiting for a voice to bid it blow; the frost was creeping surely on from the far mountains of the north, and any morning might announce that his withering footsteps had been there.

But the autumn blast, and nipping frost, had not come yet; the garden did not look as if they ever would come. There was nothing to fear,—at least, the eye which rested on the flowers, quailed not; the ear that listened to the robin's song, heard nothing to awaken apprehension or dismay. The eye gazed, and gazed, and took in visions of delight; for now the full and golden moon began to glisten through the trees, shedding her soft and peace-imparting influence over leaf and flower; and velvet sward, and shadowy walk grew out into wide distance, and strange mystery, beneath the magic of her smile.

At last there were sounds, and movements within the house which startled the lonely gazer from her silent musing; and rising slowly from her couch, and giving one long fond look into the garden, she closed the folding window, and, retreating into the room, resumed her seat.

A servant entered at that moment, announcing that a gentleman was waiting in the hall, and had asked to see Miss Linden.

"It must be my father that he wants," said Grace.

The servant replied that he asked for "Miss Linden."

Grace took the offered card. It bore the name of Clifton. A quick flush of crimson overspread her face. It was not Philip's card, though—that she knew perfectly well. Still there was some interest in meeting Philip's brother; and as it had happened that she had never met his

oldest brother, a slight agitation marked her features and her voice, as she desired the servant to show Mr. Clifton into the library.

For a moment Grace sat considering what an elder, and, as she fancied, a sterner representation of her lover, could be like; and she had fancied an imaginary picture very different indeed from Robert, when that gentleman walked into the room.

We have already hinted that Robert Clifton was looking careworn, and prematurely old; but on this occasion, he was not only careworn in his appearance, but ghastly pale—almost haggard in his ghastliness. It might be owing to the mass of jet black hair which overspread his brow; but when he raised it, as he did, with his thin white bony hand, the forehead which he laid bare, though high, and handsome in its contour, was so crossed by lines of deep anxiety, that any one who loved him would have wished the black hair back again; for truly such a brow is sad to look upon, even unsullied as it was, in his case, by anything like guilt or shame. In addition to this look of anxiety, Robert Clifton had generally high thin features, somewhat sharpened by the strictness of his arduous duties; and on the present occasion, his firm thin lips were closed with a determination which they looked as if nothing could relax. Nature, however, had given him a smile of irresistible sweetness, and a manly voice, and a laugh equally capable of ringing out a cheerful echo to the language of honest and substantial joy.

Robert, as we have already said, had never seen Grace Linden before. He had, perhaps, scarcely given himself time to form any picture of her in imagination. To him, she was a sweet, good, gentle girl, and nothing more. He had come now on an errand so important, that all the time of his journey had been spent in considering how he could best discharge his duty, rather than in dreaming about any personal charms, even had the possessor been nearer and dearer to his own heart.

Deeply absorbed in the consideration of rightly discharging his errand, Robert walked completely into the room, before

he appeared to be aware that any one was there. Indeed, the servant had only that moment lighted the lamp which stood upon the table, and the moonlight had not been shut out by the drawing of the thick crimson curtains. It was very excusable in him to start as if he had seen some supernatural being, when Grace Linden rose from the couch on which she had been seated, and advanced a few steps to meet him. A smile was on her face as she did so,—for she had seen the start, and she was so pleased to welcome Philip's brother, that she was glad of any reasonable excuse for smiling.

Robert of course begged her pardon, as he clasped the small white hand in his; and then she gently rallied him upon supposing he had seen a ghost.

"The fact is," said Robert, again drawing his hand across his forehead, "I had but just come in from the darkness, and this blaze of light is quite bewildering."

"Pray sit down," said Grace. "I am sorry my father is from home; but I don't think he will be late; and in the meantime, perhaps, you will drink your coffee with me. We are very early, old-fashioned people, Mr. Clifton. May I trouble you—the bell is at your elbow."

Robert rang the bell so violently that he startled himself, and all the household. Grace almost sprung from her seat. She thought him very unlike his brother Philip, who could be so gentle—so *very* gentle, when he liked; and he always did like when he had anything to do for her.

"This is a bad beginning," thought Robert. But beginning and end seemed all alike to him. He was lost in a maze of bewilderment, and of wretchedness unspeakable. "I have undertaken what I shall never get through," he said once to himself; but it was only once. It would never do to harbour such a thought as that again. He must go straight onward with his duty. It admitted of no question—no turning aside.

Robert Clifton had certainly not been prepared for the particular kind of beauty and attraction which he found in the sweet face and lovely form before him. It was not like his sister Helen, that every feature was perfect, and every line symmetrical; but there was an exquisite delicacy in the

beauty of Grace Linden, and an intensity of feeling in the expression of her countenance, which made him almost tremble before her, as he sat with the sad tidings still silent on his lips.

It was the habit of Grace to dress in soft flowing drapery, most frequently in white, which was always relieved by some strong rich colour, either in ribbon, shawl, or scarf. She was so gentle in her movements, so often languid and reclining, that her attitudes, and the glowing tints of drapery which she drew around her, would at any time have made a study for a painter, even had her beauty been less remarkable than it was. Her head, in its fine outline, and the contour of her face, were in perfect keeping with the rest of her appearance—gentle, but dignified, such as would indicate not only noble feeling, but noble birth. With all, however, there was a tendency to playfulness and gaiety, which made her amusing and delightful, somewhat after the manner of a child. She was not witty, still less sarcastic; but she had a quick sense of humour, and enjoyed what was grotesque or droll in others. All this laughed out at her bright hazel eyes, and seemed to dance and glisten in her shining auburn hair, which fell about her neck and temples in silken, waving, natural curls. Indeed, her hair constituted no small portion of her beauty, it was so rich in its colour, so soft and graceful in its flowing waves.

But the impression which Grace Linden's visitor received from her general appearance, though much more favourable than he had anticipated, and such as to make him regard her with a fixed attention in which the admiration might have been embarrassing had he not been Philip's brother; even this, and the deep feelings it awakened, were as nothing in comparison with the pity—the intense pity, which the contemplation of this gay, happy creature wrung from his heart. Grace looked to him like a rare and delicate flower, blooming within the atmosphere of some carefully-tended hothouse, where no cold blast had ever been allowed to blow—where no sun had ever been permitted to scorch, nor rude hand to touch, nor even foot unauthorised to tread within the precincts of the sacred place. Such, in reality, had been Grace Linden's infancy and youth.

Nor had this excessive care and tenderness produced in her case that tendency to selfishness and caprice which is its usual consequence. Kindly—most kindly, she could think and speak of others; and if, sometimes, her habits might appear to a stranger a little indulgent and requiring, no one thought them so who enjoyed the privilege of waiting upon her, because of her sweet gratitude and playful gentleness, which found expression in so many pleasant words, and acts of tenderness, all delicate and winning as those of a loving and beloved child.

Grace was so happy, too. Robert saw this at one glance. Oh, how unlike some constitutionally delicate young creatures! Never repining, never weary of her time, the very atmosphere around her seemed to have a kind of sunshine of its own, in which all her friends, and even her attendants, seemed to bask in unconscious enjoyment, as one basks in the sweet sunlight of spring, or in the calm of summer's dewy eve. There was no particular cleverness in Grace Linden's conversation—no great depth in her intellectual powers. She had no art to win, no variable mood to startle, no passion or mystery to awaken interest. But there was that about her which made the heart yearn fondly, while the involuntary exclamation would have burst from the lips of any one who had to give her pain, "No, no; I would rather suffer agony myself, than inflict upon her even a momentary pang."

No one could have felt this more acutely than Robert Clifton. But he had no choice left him. The pain which he had come to inflict could not have been borne by himself, or how would he have gathered it into his bosom, and nursed and kept it there. No, he had a stern duty laid upon him,—and it must be done.

The storm which is to purify the air, when, directed by a kind Providence, it sweeps over the earth, spares not the tender blossom nor the gently drooping flower. The deep snow-fall of winter, which comes to do the silent bidding of Him who alone knows what is best for the world he has created, spares not the garden bower, nor leaves unclothed with its chill drapery the classic marble or the fairy shell. The great work must be done, and the moral world must, like the physical, obey.



CHAPTER XIX.

He walked amid the darkness, but anon
The morn looked down, like hope, his way upon.

It was very natural that the contemplation of the painful duty which lay before him should not only cast a shadow over the countenance of Robert Clifton, but should affect his voice, his manner, his very movements, with a kind of constraint. Quick in all her womanly instincts, Grace Linden saw this, and seemed determined, by kind and gentle ways, to set her visitor more at ease, to make him more at home in her father's house, and, in short, more impressed with the fact that she was his sister in heart and feeling, though but a stranger in the literal acceptance of that word.

Robert felt all this, keenly. The gentlest look of kindness, the most delicate expression of good will, all thrilled to the very centre of his soul; but yet he was firm and true to the purpose for which he had come. He only waited to begin until the servants should have left the room. In the mean time he sipped his coffee, and spoke in a vague and most uninteresting manner on the commonplace topics of the day.

Grace thought her lover's brother was a

very hard, cold man—or rather she would have thought so, only that now and then he had turned to her with that most genial and captivating smile of his; and once, on looking suddenly up, she had found his deep dark eyes fixed full upon her face, with such a look of tenderness and sorrow, that she could almost have burst into tears, she knew not why. This look, and that peculiar smile, seemed to hold her entranced as if by a kind of fascination. She saw her visitor again the cold, stern man, which it seemed to her must be his accustomed character; but then, why had he looked at her with that strange expression? The stern look was like a wall built up betwixt them. She longed to break it down. She longed to make a friend of Philip's brother. She longed to ask for tidings of her lover. Indeed, she had not heard from him very recently: there had been a longer interval than usual without a letter; but it had never entered into her clear contented mind to apprehend that there could be any cause for this beyond some trifling accident,—or possibly she thought an increased application to study. She had no suspicions—no fears. Life looked to her like a safe and pler

journey, which she was about to take with one loved companion. There might be weariness sometimes by the way—there might be storms above, and roughness underneath her feet, but she herself would be both sheltered and supported—of this she never entertained a doubt. She had only to lean upon the strong arm, and all would be safe with her—safe, and so happy!

Robert Clifton marked this expression in the gentle face. "So happy," he said mentally, "and I must dash that happiness away." He watched the servant removing the last traces of their somewhat unsocial meal. He knew that his hour was come; there *could now* be no delay.

"My father will not be long now," said Grace, as if she herself had nothing whatever to do with the business of her visitor.

"I shall, of course, be happy to see Mr. Linden," Robert said, "but I am less anxious for his return, because the purpose of my *undisturbed* visit rests entirely with yourself."

"With myself?" said Grace, slightly starting, and yet smiling with an expression of irrepressible pleasure; "I am not very much accustomed to business, but if you have anything pleasant to tell me, as I dare say you have, you will find me a very grateful listener."

With these words Grace arched her delicate eyebrows, and looked half-laughing in the speaker's face.

Robert rose suddenly from his seat. He could not bear this look. He could not utter what he had to say with this look fixed upon him. At another time he would have walked to the window, and looked out; that was impossible now. He had done some difficult things in his life, but never anything like this.

"Can I guess the subject?" said Grace, most anxious to assist the speaker; and as she said these words, which she did with some little effort and flutter, her beautiful face was overspread with a dazzling blush, so intense and burning, that she could not choose but look down for some time afterwards, while a smile of consciousness still played about her lips.

Perhaps it was less difficult to speak with the eyes of the listener averted; and so Robert took courage to begin. "I wish," he said, "that I *had* something pleasant to tell you, my dear madam. I

wish it was my happiness, for indeed it would be great, to bring you glad tidings. Unfortunately——"

Grace looked up *fall* into his face, with a piercing brightness in her eyes. He must go on now. "Unfortunately," he began again, "the hard duty has fallen upon me to come and talk to you very seriously about my brother Philip."

A slender figure was at his side, a long white finger was laid upon his arm, before he was aware of any movement. A voice was close to his ear, and these words were whispered, or rather hissed out with breathless haste—"Is he dead?"

"Oh! no," said Robert.

"Well?"

"Quite well, in health."

"I thank God! But what——"

She could say no more. Robert supported her a second, for her own strength would scarcely have sustained her.

"Sit down," he said, "my dear Miss Linden. If you will permit me, I will take this seat at your side. Endeavour, I beseech you, to be composed. There is no illness in the case, no accident, nothing but what his friends must have already feared for Philip."

"I never feared anything," said Grace, with such an appealing look, that Robert thought he never should get through with his task.

"Did you never fear anything?" he said, "from Philip's rash, impetuous temperament?"

"Never. He did not seem rash to me."

"Did you never suspect that his habits of life were not quite what they ought to be?"

"Never. He was always good to me."

"Did you never fear that, as he was circumstanced, he might fall into the society of unprincipled young men, and so be led away?"

"Never. I did not know that he cared for any society but mine."

"But you see, my dear Miss Linden, you were far away, others were near at hand."

"Yes, but I wrote to him continually, —sheets and sheets full of kindness and good advice."

"May I ask if you have heard from him very lately?"

"I have not."

"Did you not suspect there might be some particular cause for his silence?"

"I suspected nothing. Mr. Clifton, what do you mean? Have you come here to poison my mind with suspicions against your brother?"

Grace turned upon the speaker a glance of such intense repulsion, it looked almost like hatred. A moment before he would not have believed her capable of such a look.

"Philip Clifton," she said, haughtily, "I know well. I do *not* know you. Judge then which of the two I am likely to believe?"

Robert spoke calmly when he answered,—"My brother Philip would confirm all that I have to say about him. He knows of my coming here, why I have come, and what I shall tell you, and he knows it is the truth."

"It is easy for you to say so," said Grace, still in the same indignant tone; "but why should I believe you? I tell you once for all, Mr. Clifton, that if you dare to utter a single syllable against your brother, I will *not* believe you. I *can* believe that you are a false man. I *could* believe that the sun had ceased to shine, and that the whole order of Nature was reversed; but anything against Philip Clifton, I am incapable of believing."

"Nevertheless," said Robert, with a voice still calm, though expressive of intense suffering,—"nevertheless, you *must* believe it."

"I tell you I will not," said Grace.

"Then," replied Robert, "I have but one alternative left. My duty is the same. I must speak to your father."

"My father? Never!"

"I must."

"What right have you to take this business, whatever it may be, so much into your own hands?"

"I have this right,—that Philip is my brother."

"He is more mine than yours,—he is my brother, friend, protector,—almost husband."

"For that very reason, you ought to understand him better."

"I do understand him better than you, or any one."

"You understand his better qualities, I have no doubt. Would to God he had no others!"

"He has no others, I tell you; and it is a wicked, cruel libel to say that he has."

"Very well, then, Miss Linden. My duty to you is done. I will await the return of your father, but do not let me trespass upon your private hours. Perhaps you will allow your servant to conduct me to another apartment."

Grace had expended all her anger, all her indignation. Weak as a crushed flower, she had fallen back upon the couch from which, in the fervour of her emotion, she had risen. Both her hands were now pressed violently upon her eyes, but she could not force back her tears. They would gush out, and thick and fast they now came pouring over her cheeks. It was well they did. Nature,—her nature at least, was not capable of bearing such a struggle without the natural relief of tears.

Robert could not leave this delicate creature weeping and sobbing as she was now. In spite of her strong assurances to the contrary, he had believed all the while that some sad misgiving was striking deep at the root of her confidence; and he believed, too, that her anger would give way. For himself, she might still hate and loathe him, as who would not under such circumstances?—but he thought she would listen at last; and he was right. Waving her hand to indicate a wish that he should again sit down on the couch beside her, Grace covered her face with her handkerchief, leaned forward so as to support herself on the table which stood by, and then said, "Go on. Spare nothing,—tell me all; but tell it only to me."

"My brother," Robert said, "we all know has a warm heart, and an excellent disposition."

Poor Grace put out her soft white hand and clasped Robert's with a pressure so intense, that he knew and felt its meaning. The only consolation she had now was to hear him speak kind words of his brother.

"Go on," she said again.

"There are facts," he said, "that you ought to have been acquainted with before this time."

"What are they?"

"That Philip had heavy debts at college."

"All young men have."

"And in other places, too, which in the circumstances of our family, it has been very difficult to discharge."

Grace had been speaking with her face buried in her handkerchief. She now looked full into Robert's face, as she said—"If that is all, Mr. Clifton, I have property of my own—I will discharge these debts to the uttermost farthing."

"The debts *are* discharged, Miss Linden," said Robert; "at least they were. What new ones may have been incurred, I do not know. When the money was advanced for the payment, it was under a solemn assurance on the part of my brother, that there should be no more of the same kind, and an assurance as solemn on mine, that if the general habits of his life were not altered, I would myself be the messenger of these evil tidings to you. I am come now as this messenger to you, my dear Miss Linden, because I feel in my heart that you ought to know what my brother's conduct is; some time or other you must know this, and it is better now than later."

"You speak of conduct," said Grace—"I dare not ask what you mean; but I pray you to remember how short the time has been since his return. May there not have been some misrepresentation?"

"I have it from himself—on his own confession."

Grace wept again, more bitterly than before; and again she repeated—"The time has been so short."

"It has been long enough for him to be expelled," said Robert.

"Expelled?"

"Yes, virtually expelled; though one might give it a milder name."

"And where is he now?"

"In London, I believe. But wherever he may be, he is penniless and destitute—I will not say abandoned, but I know not what to make of him."

"How do you know that he is not penitent?"

"Penitent he may be, and I hope he is; but indeed, indeed Miss Linden, Philip has done sadly wrong."

"So have we all."

"In the sight of God, no doubt we have. Pray do not think I would make myself my brother's judge. I speak especially of those temporal affairs—those considera-

tions of common prudence, which render it impossible that my brother should keep that hold upon you which he was indeed a happy man ever to obtain."

"In this, Mr. Clifton, I must judge for myself: and in order that I may do so, it is necessary that you should tell me more—tell it gently, but still tell me all. I will try to bear it; and if you speak kindly and gently, perhaps I can."

It was a difficult task for Robert to speak so kindly and gently as he otherwise would, with that fair bending form—that stricken flower before him. The very thought of what his brother had possessed in her deep love, in herself, and in all the agreeable associations by which she was surrounded—the very thought of what his brother had possessed in these, and had wickedly and wantonly cast from him, seemed to take away all tenderness for one who could be so blind, so mad, so selfish, as to prefer the amusement of vile associates, and the momentary gratification of base low passions, to the life of honour, of peace, and of exalted happiness, which he might have enjoyed with her.

If there was a spectacle on earth which it tried Robert Clifton's patience to contemplate more than all others, it was woman's love courted, obtained, possessed, and then not valued at its mighty worth. Such love he saw before him now, gushing in hot tears from the noble generous heart that had never known a grief before. Robert was naturally indignant at injustice, shame, and folly; and thinking still of his brother, and his madness, he could almost rather have lifted his hand against him in bodily violence, than have spoken tenderly of his abominable vices. But for her sake he must control himself. There could be no good in speaking his whole mind. Facts were enough, and to these Robert confined himself, going through the disgraceful and miserable history of his brother's life, so far as he knew it himself; telling shortly, but fairly, those circumstances which have already been described, and then concluding with the crowning scene, which was nothing more nor less than a street brawl, in which Philip had taken upon himself to do battle with the lawful authorities, in defiance of all order and all shame.

After the time of Philip's last interview

with Robert, he had placed himself with a clergyman for the purpose of pursuing his studies more diligently than before. For a while all went well. His companions were absent, and he was situated almost beyond the reach of temptation. But no sooner did the same parties meet again in the same scenes, than Philip's better resolutions melted away almost as rapidly as if he had no claim upon him for the future, no compunction for the past, and no strong motive for controlling his passions during the present hour.

How Philip might have resisted these temptations, had he been always what his companions would have called "himself," it is impossible to say; but one part of the madness of such a character invariably consists in having habitual recourse to stimulants, which inflame the lower passions, while they weaken the power of reason and the sense of right. Thus Philip seldom was, in this sense of the word, *himself*; nor in all probability did he ever, from the same cause, arrive at a clear conviction of what was the real nature of his own conduct. His own character he had never studied—indeed it was not his habit to reflect upon anything. He loved or hated—wished and pursued, or opposed and subdued, just as inclination prompted. These were the ruling faculties which governed him. He felt that his heart was kind, at the moment when impulse made it so, and thus he concluded it must be good. He had no ill-will—no wish to injure those who never opposed or thwarted him; and thus he came to imagine himself, upon the whole, a good-natured, easy-going fellow. He only wanted to enjoy himself—why should he not? If anything stood in his way it must be overcome; and if any one prevented his enjoying himself, woe betide them!

As regarded principle, we are not prepared to say that Philip Clifton stood at a disadvantage with many of his fellow men. Hundreds and thousands we believe, even in this day, and amidst the scenes of our boasted enlightenment, go forth into the world with no better preparation of principle to keep them right. Experience teaches many by lessons of worldly wisdom. God in his mercy teaches others by his word, by afflictions, by means sometimes the least probable to us, he teaches many

that there is "a more excellent way," and he also makes them willing and able to walk in it; but for the rest, they take the path which inclination points to at the moment, and bear the blame, and suffer the consequences of what, with God's help, might possibly have been prevented in early youth.

Robert did not charge his brother with want of principle, he only stated facts; from these he did not flinch, nor did he try to palliate them. It was the truth which he had come to tell, and he told it clearly, and as much as could be at once. No eye could see, not even his, quick-sighted as it was, how that truth fell, nor what agonies it inflicted, where it touched and rankled like a poisoned arrow. The face of the sufferer was still covered, and only a slight rocking motion of the whole figure, and a quivering of the white fingers which held the handkerchief so closely pressed, told how the poison worked, even at the very spring of life. Such is the consequence of vice; such, at one time or another, with some sufferer, and not unfrequently with many, are the results of that career which men call pleasure.

It was only pleasing himself, Philip Clifton might have said, which had brought down this terrible, this irremediable misery upon the unoffending head of one who loved him as her life. He had never intended to injure any one. The last thing he would have wished, would have been to wring a tear from her bright eyes. No, he had only pleased himself at the moment, without thinking of the consequences. May God forgive us the wrongs we commit against others, but especially against his holy law, when we are only pleasing ourselves.

The wrong was here most manifest. Robert wished that his brother could have seen such a picture as he was now contemplating, and have seen it in time. He now thought it was mistaken kindness, and misplaced delicacy which had induced him to be silent until now. Had he spoken out at once, perhaps Philip might have been checked in time. Now, his circumstances looked altogether hopeless; for if even in future he should resume his studies, what was he to do in the mean time? No doubt the poor weeping sufferer thought of that, for when

Robert had ceased to speak, and a few minutes' silence had ensued, she seemed to fear that he might be going away, and so made an effort to rouse herself in order to say what was upon her mind. She made an effort to rouse herself; but, oh, what a picture of despair Robert saw, when he looked again, attracted by the faint sound of her voice! It seemed impossible that so short a time should have wrought so terrible a change. The beautiful hair was all disordered now, though still beautiful, for no disorder could make it otherwise; the soft eyes were red with weeping; the lips swollen and inarticulate. Still there was an effort to speak, and Robert drew nearer, quite near, for he had lost all sense of distance and reserve in the excess of his sorrow and his compassion.

Grace held up her hand; he took it fondly within his, and pressed it, almost with the feelings of a father towards a child; for she was so helpless, so gentle, as to be almost like a child to him. Something in that mute expression of feeling seemed to fill her cup of agony with one drop too much, and fairly giving herself up, to lean with her head against his heart, she burst into a fresh flood of tears, and wept and moaned aloud.

For some time Robert stood still, supporting in this way the weak and trembling figure. He did not speak, for he had no words of consolation to utter. At last he sunk down on the couch, and softly laying the beautiful head upon his shoulder, he actually stroked the silken hair with all the tenderness of a woman, not knowing what he did.

Perhaps it was easier for Grace Linden to speak thus, for a low murmuring sound broke at last from her lips. "Penniless and destitute," she said, as if speaking to herself.

"I should not have said that," Robert answered; "you may feel quite sure I shall not allow him to suffer destitution. No, no, it is not so bad as that. He shall be provided for respectably, in some way or other. Do not, I beseech you, allow that thought to add to your sufferings."

"I, you know, have plenty," said Grace in a faint low voice, "abundance, more than I want. If you would allow me to add something?"

"Impossible!" said Robert; "that must never be."

"Do, dear Mr. Clifton," said Grace again,—"do let me add something to what you give. No one has so great a right, you know."

It was very difficult to refuse this meek request, uttered as it was in that sad beseeching voice. Robert evaded it as well as he could, and Grace went on still in the same tone of inexpressible sadness and sweetness.

"You will not say anything to my father?" she said.

"No, certainly, if you wish me to be silent."

"Nor to any one but me?"

"To my own family, I am afraid I must give some explanation."

"But you will not tell them all, not the very worst? The worst you know is for me. Let me have it, and keep it all to myself."

"I will do the best I can for you, sparing your feelings as if you were my own sister."

A gentle pressure of the hand again assured him that this promise was appreciated. But Grace soon spoke again.

"I must see him again."

"See Philip?"

"Yes, I must see him, and soon. Only once, you know; I have a right to demand this."

"Unquestionably. Fix your own time, and means, and I will obey you in everything."

"I should not like to act clandestinely; as Philip has been accustomed to come to my father's house unquestioned, and as no one here will know that any change has taken place, why not let him come as before? Let me see; my father will be from home some day next week; I do not know exactly which. Suppose I write to you, that will be better, and I will then fix the exact time."

It was so agreed; and Robert took leave of Grace with what composure he was able to command. He was obliged to do so with some abruptness, in order to hide from observation the sudden gush of feeling which threatened to overmaster him. Once away from the light—once removed from the appealing look of those soft eyes—once with the breath of night

blowing full upon his cheek, and he should feel himself a man again. In this mood he walked rapidly to his father's house, demanded an interview with his mother and his sisters, explained to them as well as he could in few words what had been the purport of his visit, and, without suffering himself to be detained by their tears or their caresses, set out again to travel back to London through the dark midnight hours.

"Well," said Robert Clifton to himself, as he pursued his journey back to London, "if this is the beginning of life with me, what will be the end? The way is tolerably rough at the commencement, at all events; and when fortune hits so hard upon a poor fellow, for such a length of time, instead of thinking the future will be brighter and pleasanter than the past, he rather acquires a habit of thinking there is worse in store for him, even yet. Whatever may befall me, however, in the days that are to come, I do not believe I shall ever have a more difficult or painful duty to perform than that which it has just now been my unhappy lot to discharge. Poor Grace! I wish she had a sister, or that Mary could be near her."

It did not seem to Robert that he could wish a better wish to any one than that Mary could be near them; and at the very mention of that name a feeling of peace and satisfaction diffused itself through his whole frame, accompanied with a conviction that he ought not to allow himself to be either hopeless for the future, or depressed for the present, so long as Mary's kind interest, and her affection as he had every reason to believe, was left to him.

The acquaintance already alluded to, which had begun in so simple and business-like a manner, had now ripened into intimacy. Indeed, it was scarcely possible it should have been otherwise, for no two characters could have been found better calculated to render to each other all the kind offices of friendship than Robert, and Mary Maitland. Nor was it only that nature had gifted them with habits of feeling, modes of thought, and tendencies of character alike; but circumstances had thrown them both in early life upon their own resources, teaching them a de-

gree of self-dependence which none can fully understand, still less appreciate at its true worth, who have not themselves acquired this valuable possession. Thus it might have seemed to an indifferent observer, to any one indeed whose position was one of ease, luxury, and self-indulgence, that they were both too independent of others, too isolated in themselves, and too self-supported. To them, however, this peculiarity was perfectly intelligible.

They knew—none could know better—how it had originated, and how it had grown into a part of their characters. They knew, also, that it was but as the armour which the soldier puts on, in order to enable him to bear the assaults of the enemy—they knew the battle which they had individually had to fight, and were fighting every day, and they knew all the warm and genial glow of the heart which beat beneath this panoply of steel. Each had penetrated this secret in the other, because each knew it so well in themselves. Thus a kind of sympathy, beyond what mere external circumstances could have excited, arose betwixt them. On one side there was urgent need of help, on the other of consolation, and each had it in their power to yield exactly what the other wanted. They would almost have understood and been able to assist each other without words; but no sooner did their pent-up feelings find utterance than the intimacy, as already stated, ripened into friendship, and was fast ripening into love.

It was one of those friendships upon which love may build with confidence; and where is it safe without this firm foundation? There was no caprice, no affectation, no pretence in their intercourse, but a calm reliance upon each other, which gave rise to a constant development of mind and principle, as interesting in its details as it was fruitful in satisfaction. In such an attachment there is scarcely more repose, where peace is needed, than strength and support where difficulties have to be overcome, or where suffering has to be endured.

Almost unconsciously to themselves, this attachment had grown into a closer union of mind and feeling. Words had not been necessary to explain the change. It was mutually felt, understood, and ac-

knowledge in a thousand ways quite easy of interpretation without the utterance of the lips. A time was coming now, however, when Robert felt that it would no longer be honourable to remain silent, and as he journeyed on he formed his resolution quietly, and without consulting any one, as he always did, indeed, for he had learned to act that manly part almost while he was still a boy; and now he felt that no one *could* help him, even if he should ask their help.

But there were other weighty matters to decide upon, besides those which lay nearest to his heart; and surely never did lover seek his lady's bower with such a weary load of carking care upon his breast—care, too, about things so utterly degrading to the name of love, because so unrefined and unpoetical in themselves. To speak of love, too, under such circumstances, would have sounded like madness to the ear of worldly wisdom, for Robert was about to cast himself almost penniless upon the world—to begin life entirely again—to try a great experiment, which rendered it uncertain whether he should be able to secure so much as his daily bread.

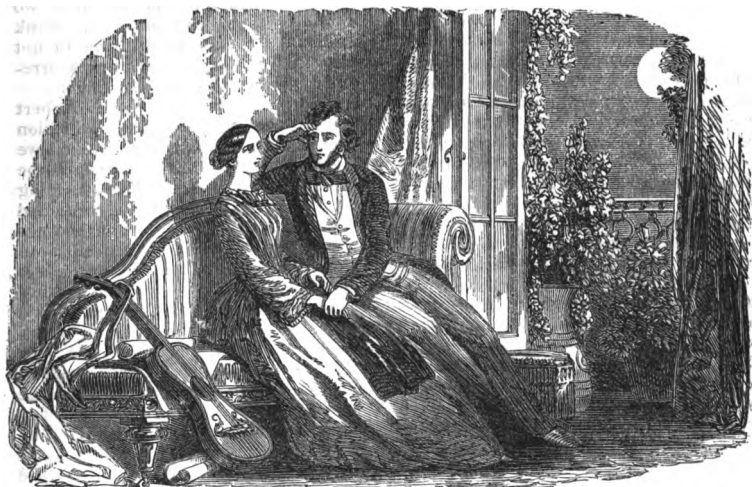
From what has already been said, it may be taken for granted, as an incontrovertible fact, that Robert Clifton never had been at home, or in his element, in his father's business. He had entered into it from a sense of duty, and had pursued it as a matter of necessity, almost on compulsion. But it had not improved upon him by acquaintance, nor had he ever felt, in connection with it, that energy and hope which was necessary to stimulate enterprise, as well as to afford support under disappointment. He had done his best, and, having sound sense and strong powers of application, having the most powerful motive, too, in the circumstances of his family, it is probable that his best was as much as most men would have been able to do, and better indeed than many, whose hearts might have been more in their occupation. Had the business prospered, Robert would no doubt have gone steadily on in the same line, still faithfully doing his best. But, as already stated, it was far indeed from being in a prosperous condition when he took the whole weight upon his shoulders, and his business prospects

had not brightened since. Rather the contrary; for within the last month or two some heavy losses had made him think whether, if longer pursued, it might not involve himself and his family in irretrievable ruin.

Under these circumstances, Robert knew that his father, in the full possession of his business faculties, would have plunged further and further in, on the principle of "nothing venture, nothing win." He knew that he would have cried shame upon him for his want of courage in shrinking back from the venture; but he knew, also, that in his case there was too much at stake for him to be justified in risking all upon a perilous uncertainty. Where there were so many to be considered he dared not do it, nor had he any hope of success if he should. A very humble certainty, he thought, for the sake of his parents would be infinitely preferable to such a risk; and this certainty he was now most solicitous to ensure for them. Already some important steps had been taken towards this end, and then he thought, that for the first time since he entered into business, he should experience something like peace of mind.

For himself Robert allowed very little consideration. He could fight his way along one course or another; but for his parents he had suffered deeply, and for his sisters too. Knowing as he did but little of the real circumstances of the case, he was sorry to hear, on this short visit to his home, that Helen's prospects for the future were so seriously changed. He wondered what caprice had brought about this change, but he had neither time nor inclination to press upon his sisters inquiries which did not seem to meet with any very willing or intelligible response. All that he had learned distinctly was, that Helen, not Catherine, was to be the governess, and he was already commissioned with the charge of making such inquiries as were considered most likely to lead to the fulfilment of this her fixed determination.

With this fresh care upon his mind, then, Robert pursued his way. While there was so much to think about—so much to do for others, he found little time to murmur at his own lot—only to hail the light of the one solitary star which still shone upon his path.



CHAPTER XX.

Now discussing many a plan,
Sits the sad and weary man,
By the side of her, with whom
Life could never be all gloom.

PERHAPS it was well for Robert Clifton that so many, and such urgent cares were pressing upon his mind at the same time, as to preclude the possibility of his feeling any single cause of sorrow, or anxiety, to the full extent of what would otherwise have been its influence upon him.

How often is it well for us all that such is the case! How often is it our best earthly consolation that one grief takes off the edge of another,—that one anxiety pushes off, as it were, the burden of another. People are thought to be peculiarly afflicted, sometimes even hardly dealt with, when a series of troubles falls upon them, in quick succession; but a single solitary grief standing out in the midst of life's sunshine,—a single arrow sent into the heart when all else is peace, and luxury, and repose,—a single adder in the path when the ground is thickly strewn with flowers,—a single drop of poison in the draught when the lips are re-
 vealing

themselves with sweets,—we fancy these, in the experience of any human heart, would be found even worse to bear, than a whole host of calamities heaped one upon another. Such calamities fall like winter upon the soul, and like winter it braves them. We know when the frosts of autumn come that the leaves will fall from the trees, and we prepare for blast, and storm, and biting cold; but the hurricane of summer leaves a desolation behind it more cruel in proportion as the peace and the beauty which it found was more entire.

"Well," said Robert again, as he turned over his troubles, one after another, "I could bear anything better than the spectacle of that sweet girl. I could bear any thing, and everything, in which guilt was not concerned. Guilt?" he said again, fearing he was hard upon his brother "Yes, guilt," he repeated, "for it is guilt, even to be thoughtless and selfish where such a depth of misery to another is incurred. It is guilt to act upon the mere animal passion of a moment, when God has given us higher powers by which these passions can be mastered, and made

even useful in their subservience to reason and to right. Yet, after all, I do not know but that even Philip is to be pitied. What could he do with nothing to occupy him but classics, mathematics, and such mere mental occupations? Why, he should have been a pioneer for an army, or at any rate for an exploring expedition of engineers. He should have done the bold, hard, bodily work, with that fine Hæmæan frame of his, for a party of settlers in some barbarous and inhospitable country. He should have had to sell, to buy, to build houses, drag boats across the land, to dig, cleave, hew, and even to fight, but wild beasts only. I should be sorry to find Philip even involved in fighting with his fellow-men. It would be a battle to the death, on one side or another. Poor Philip! The question is, what can he do now? He did not something about emigrating, and, certainly, so far as I can see, there is nothing within the range of possibility that would suit him so well."

Self-reliant as he had become, and as circumstances had compelled him to be, Robert was still young enough, and possessed sufficient of the genial warmth and sympathy of youth, to feel the need of a friend, and not to value that friend the less because she wore the graceful form of woman. Indeed, his nature was one which could not so easily have held intercourse with any man on the same terms of perfect openness and freedom.

On reaching London, then, he lost no time in seeking this friend. The hour was too late for business, but he knew that Mary would be waiting for him with anxious expectation. He knew that in her he should find all the careful solicitude of a sister, while she listened to his sad story. To her alone would it have been possible for him to tell it, for there was something too sacred in the sorrow he had witnessed, for him to describe it even to his own family; and he had hastened from his sisters on the plea of being compelled to return immediately to London without allowing them time to press him with minute inquiries. That Philip had disgraced himself was sufficient, and too much: the rest could be imagined. To no man, however intimate or confidential, could Robert have told what transpired during his interview with Grace

Linden; but it was a natural, and almost necessary relief to his overburdened heart to tell this, in part, at least, to Mary Maitland, for she listened with such intense interest, and yet with such tender, womanly sympathy, that it seemed almost as if she gathered the grief into her own bosom, to nurse it there, and so to keep it sacred from any vulgar or familiar touch. Besides which, she was personally a stranger to the poor sufferer. They had never met, and, in all probability, never would meet; and, from this cause also, there seemed less breach of confidence in speaking to Mary on that sad subject, freely and openly.

It would have been a curious study for an indifferent observer to have watched these two companions in trouble, and anxiety; to have marked their constrained countenances, to have heard their sage reflections, and then to have been told that they were young, and more than that, that they were lovers. Alas! for the young affection that is born under such a cloud. Alas! indeed, if love were only the fabled image of the poet's fancy—capricious, light, and ever on the wing! Alas! for love indeed; for in the serious intercourse of these two friends, love was scarcely mentioned—marriage scarcely thought of. And yet they perfectly understood each other; and without venturing to give a name to their feelings, they each found expression in little acts of kindness and consideration, which the other understood; and they each reposed in the affection of the other, with a confidence, perhaps, even more unshaken and entire, than where love finds utterance in vows and promises, and rapturous expressions.

Still there is something sad, though sweet, in affection thus sown, and nourished into life under the shadow of dark, gloomy care. There is always something sad in that affection which, though mutual, the lips are afraid to speak of, because of the heavy pall which hangs around it, making the heart in which it is nursed, however tenderly, more like a sepulchre than an altar of Hymen. There is something sad in that affection which is cherished, however fondly, without venturing to look onward, or fix a date, even in imagination, when friends thus united,

and thus necessary to each other, shall share their worldly lot together, walking hand in hand through the remainder of their earthly pilgrimage.

We blame, and blame justly, the selfish imprudence of those who choose to marry under these circumstances; and we know that nobler hearts and higher principles would have taught them the virtue of waiting, rather than risking the chance of ruin to themselves and others; but we fancy it is the desolateness of this long hopeless waiting—the picture they draw for themselves of their future, which drives them to this alternative, more than any deliberate calculation upon what they shall gain by their rashness and imprudence.

But the two friends here described, besides their own high sterling principle, had been so schooled by circumstances, that the habit of consulting duty had become with them a kind of second nature; and thus they scarcely listened to the voice of inclination where a duty had to be done. It would have weakened their resolution to think on all subjects, first, what they should like. They both felt this, and, consequently, they were the better able to support each other in thinking only what was right, and fittest to be done. Making this the first rule in their actions, they were, perhaps, more happy in such pleasures as fell to their lot by the way, than any can be in this world who think of the pleasure first, and then turn to the duty as a secondary thought—if, indeed, it ever does come second, where pleasure occupies the first and highest place. Much more frequently is duty last—and then how hard, how difficult—how bitter is the taste of duty on the lip which has drank with eagerness the cup of pleasure, leaving the duty to the last.

One of the great considerations which occupied Robert Clifton's mind about the present was what was best to be done with regard to his prospects in life. In this he knew that Mary could assist him, for her judgment was mature beyond her years, and she had early formed the habit just alluded to, of looking to that which was wisest and fittest to be done, rather than to that which was most attractive and agreeable. In the settlement of this great question, Robert was afraid of

himself, because he had from the very first been constitutionally averse to the line of occupation which had been selected for him. Thus, he was afraid, and very justly so, of being deceived by his tastes and inclinations. He was afraid of persuading himself that the thing was right which it was most agreeable for him to do. Still there was nothing *very* agreeable which presented itself to his choice. If he gave up his present business, he knew of no practicable means of escaping poverty and wretchedness in future. But then, poverty and wretchedness seemed inevitable now; and besides this, he had no chance whatever of retaining even his present precarious position, except by borrowing large sums of money which, until they were repaid, he felt might prove a burden that would weigh him into the grave.

It had always been a principle with Robert to beg rather than borrow, and to work with his hands at the hardest and most degrading occupation, rather than do either. He knew that his father had borrowed largely. He had felt the galling weight of these loans like a chain of spikes around his neck. In order to pay them off, he had strained every nerve, and worked at his desk with a diligence that left him scarcely time for necessary rest or sleep. If the business should be given up now, he knew that on a moderate calculation there would be enough to pay all, besides purchasing a small annuity for his parents. For himself, he did not care. He had health and youth, though both had been sorely taxed; but he could work in a thousand ways, he doubted not; and surely the busy world—surely even the great city of London itself would afford him something to do.

Robert knew the great city of London, however, quite well enough to understand how an able hand, even when accompanied by a willing mind, may remain long unoccupied within its smoke and dust. He knew how weary feet may pace its busy streets in vain; and he began to regret, when it was too late, that he had cared so little for society as to have but few influential or able friends to whom he could apply for direction in the way of finding employment. As a prosperous city merchant, he might have had friends in plenty,

and friends, too, who would have been happy to assist him, if, under such circumstances, he could have wanted help; but to relinquish the business altogether, to break up the old standing firm, and to walk penniless about the streets,—that was a very different matter, and argued, all who heard of it would have thought, either disgraceful incompetency on his part, or something very strange in the conduct of affairs which had to be brought to so dishonourable an issue.

Well acquainted as he was with the popular opinions of mankind on subjects of this nature, Robert deemed it best to keep his own counsel, with the exception of that one adviser who brought to their mutual deliberations as sage a countenance, and, perhaps, as wise a judgment, as ever were found in connection with so short an experience of life. Both, as they sat together consulting, expressed their terror and their fear of debt; both saw the risk—in the present instance the more than risk—the absolute probability that what might be borrowed could never be repaid. “And then—” Both said these words at the same moment, and they looked at each other as if the earth was opening at their feet.

“Anything but that!” said Mary, and her companion answered—“Anything but that. Yes; anything—a mud cottage in a wilderness, with nothing but wild roots and berries to exist upon, would be preferable to that. Mary, would you like to go to a new country?”

“I often think I should. Perhaps it is something peculiar to my situation; but I do feel so weary sometimes, and then I think I should like to go to a new country, and begin life again, quite upon a different plan.”

“Yes,” said Robert, “there is much to grow weary of in this. We live in a state of society so artificial—so complex, that any single interest seems entangled and inwoven with other interests; so that if you lay hold of one thread there is no calculating what it may draw out after it.”

“In any little attempt we may make to do good,” said Mary, “this fact is very striking. And how much more so it must be in any great attempt!”

“You and I,” said Robert, “had, perhaps, better keep our attention to little

things. I am afraid we shall not help the philanthropist much until we have learned how to do good to ourselves.”

“Oh! that is a very narrow and low view of yours.”

“Does not care, as the old song says, always bring us down to be narrow and low, making the young man selfish as well as gray?”

“That is the worst of anxiety and trouble; it compels us to think so much about ourselves,—to plan and act so generally with a view to our own interests, that we cease almost, in time, to care anything about the interests of others. It is well you and I have found each other out in this great wilderness.”

“It is, indeed well, Mary; but in what respect do you mean?”

“I mean because I have you to think about, and you have me; and, consequently, we never more can be wholly wrapped up in ourselves.”

“We could follow out this plan more entirely, if we left this country altogether, and began life afresh in a new and distant world. What say you, Mary? Seriously—will you go?”

“Oh! Robert, remember my mother. She would pine to death in a state of existence that would be luxury to you and me. And your parents, also, what would become of them, when their prop was taken away from them?—your sisters, too, who would stand by them, and keep them? Ah! I know what it is to have no brother—no father—no protector.”

“But what can I do, Mary?”

“Oh! you have already done so much for us all!”

“But what can I do in the way of making a living, if I must ask that vulgar question?”

“What have you tried?”

“Nothing yet, except the old business. I don’t know what to try.”

“Talking to an indifferent person, I should say, what can you do?”

“If that is the question, I can draw; but what of that?”

“To be sure, drawing is not much in itself; but yours is not a simple genius for drawing, as an art. There is something else you can do, and something upon which I fancy that your drawing is mainly dependent.”

"What is that?"

"You can invent—construct. Yours is the genius of an architect, or an engineer."

"Genius, indeed!"

"Yes, genius."

"Well, and what will my genius do for me?"

"What it has done for others, I dare say."

"You might as well speak of a genius for music, as a means of living, to a man of my age, who had never learned the practice of it."

"Not at all. The cases are not similar."

"Show me the difference."

"Music, above all other arts, requires mechanical adaption of the muscles to that rapid execution which can only be attained by long and patient practice. One may learn the theory of music at any age, but the practice requires a vast number of muscular efforts which are not familiar, and, consequently, extremely difficult when the hand is firm and stiff, and unaccustomed to these movements. Drawing, on the other hand, requires nothing of the muscles different from what they are employed in every day, in writing, or in various kinds of employment familiar to all."

"I understand you. But still I should have so much to learn that I should stand at a great disadvantage amongst men whose early training had been expressly for the same pursuit. Besides which, my natural inclination leads me so entirely this way, that I am afraid of trusting myself, and of calling that the decision of judgment, which is only the bias of taste. It is one of those questions on which I need the help of an impartial mind, and, therefore, it is no mere compliment when I appeal to you for your best and most sage advice."

"Sage advice, indeed! from a girl like me. Well, there is no one to hear what you say, and, consequently, no one to laugh; so we will go on with our grave business. Do you never meet with Mr. Peterson now?"

"I have not seen him very lately. Indeed, I have not sought his acquaintance."

"Why not?"

"He has become more and more occu-

pied in public affairs, and I do not like to intrude myself upon his notice."

"No, certainly, not without sufficient reason; but don't you think the offer of your services might be a reasonable ground for application? Now, don't shake your head despondingly, nor let that misanthropic pride of yours stand in your way. Thousands of applications of this kind are being made every day by much grander men than you are, and men who don't consider themselves degraded by it, either."

"It is partly because of the number of these applications to men situated like Mr. Peterson, that I cannot edge myself in amongst them."

"And partly—I will confess it for you—partly because of a little natural independence of spirit, which I call pride."

"I confess it."

"I have felt the same, and, therefore, ought to understand what it is. But I have learned to think that we are a little unreasonable in the exercise of this kind of pride, for it makes us forget, on such occasions, that we are really asking no favour. In my own case, where should I have been now,—where would my poor mother have been, if I had stood upon this pride, and refused to ask employment when all that I wanted was a fair remuneration for my services? We talk about a new world, and a more natural order of things. I confess there are some views of the old that make me not only weary, but sick at heart. One of these is the distorted manner in which people here have come to regard the exchange of necessary commodities for money. I often think of this, as I walk the streets of London, and see the cringing, servile, despicable methods people have recourse to, in order to induce purchasers to deign to look in upon what they have to sell. As if there was any condescension in the matter at all,—as if one party was not quite as much obliged and accommodated as the other. Indeed, I almost fancy the one who is permitted to buy what he wants, who has not only the best article got ready for his use, but an endless variety of similar articles spread before him out of which he may make his own choice,—I almost fancy, in my simplicity, that this person is the one who ought to acknowledge oblige-

tion; and if there is any cringing and bowing beyond what the case demands, that it ought to be on his part. I see you smile, as, no doubt, all men of business would smile, at my unenlightened notions; but just think for a moment what power these bowing, cringing shopkeepers have in their hands—just think, if they should all agree some morning that they would not open their shops at all, nor sell a single article that day.”

“In the present state of things, and with our easy and rapid means of communication, their customers would soon obtain their supplies elsewhere. But we are suppressing impossibilities, for such is the power of self-interest, that even if an open compact of this kind were entered into, there would be certain parties, and not a few either, who would gladly seize the opportunity of breaking the compact, so as to take advantage of a larger amount of custom for themselves. It is thus the world goes—thus the affairs of life are conducted, wherever society exists.”

“Except in its primitive state.”

“Yes, except in its primitive state, where the man who first begins to keep a store is really the most important and influential member of the community.”

“Still the reason, the right, the moral of the thing is the same; and I feel no shame now in saying to any gentleman or lady who has a child to educate, ‘Sir, or Madam, I will educate your child for you, if you will give me so and so,’ because I know that I could bring with me just those services which they want, which they have money to pay for, and which, without paying money, it would be impossible for them to obtain. Nay, the world would indeed smile, and, perhaps, you would smile too, if I were to add, what is still the truth, how often it enters into the head of the poor governess, passing uncared for and unhonoured to her daily work—how often it enters into her head, that, taking into account all her attainments, all her mental culture, all her necessary superiority of mind——”

“Where she has it.”

“Yes, where she has it, certainly—taking all this into account, and the immense pains she is taking with other people’s children, perhaps where they are not at all

agreeable children in her estimation, though paragons in that of their fond parents—taking all this into account, the world might smile, but I do not see why it should, at the idea entering sometimes into the head of the governess that she is not only doing a great service to the family by whom she is employed, but also a great honour.”

“Well done! my noble hearted Mary! You have indeed summed up the matter in a strange form; and if there was not in your general tone and manner the very opposite to vanity or presumption, I should be as much afraid of your pride as you seem to be of mine.”

“Oh! but perhaps you mistake me after all.”

“I only know that your words sound very large, and would sound very strange to any one who might be listening to us, knowing that by nine o’clock to-morrow morning you would have to turn out in the rain, or frost, or snow, to give some little boys and girls their daily lessons in grammar and arithmetic.”

“Yes, but there are so many different ways of looking at all things. Now I like always to keep looking up.”

“So it seems.”

“Wait until I explain myself, for I cannot bear even to have left the tone of anything upon your ear that sounds like pride in me, and still more should I dislike the charge of any—even the most remote—symptom of conceit in myself, or over confidence in my own powers. I said I liked to look upwards. It is by that means I see my own littleness and emptiness of anything that could possibly awaken pride. The higher our estimate of talent in others, I believe, the lower is generally our idea of our own. By the same habit I believe we learn to think humbly, not only of our talents, but of every kind of good that we possess. I confess to you that I think even the daily governess might sometimes feel a little self exaltation when comparing her own attainments with those of the parties who need her services; but, on the other hand, she has only to look around her, and compare herself with the gifted, the learned, and the wise, to see how extremely insignificant is all that she possesses in comparison with theirs.”

"I believe, that in the habit of looking upwards, we frequently over-estimate the qualities of those whom we think above us."

"Well, it is a pleasant kind of mistake to make; and if it be a mistake, I think I should be very reluctant to be undeceived. It is so delightful to admire—to reverence—and, if we love, to do so with the perfect approbation of our judgment. But we have wandered far from the business in hand. It was pride, I think, that led us astray, as indeed it so often does. Suppose we cast this pride altogether aside, and return again to your making an open, honest, manly offer of your services to Mr. Peterson. You knew him once. Why not renew your acquaintance with him?"

"I would rather renew it on any other terms than those of asking a favour."

"Oh! now you are introducing pride again. I thought the enemy was dismissed. Alas! for my arguments, too; how profitless they have been! I thought I had convinced you that there was no favour at all in the matter—that in such an application you would only be offering your services; and good, useful, manly services, too, on condition that you should receive equitable payment in return. Depend upon it you will not receive *more* than your services are worth; therefore I do not see that there is any favour in the matter."

"I wish Mr. Peterson would look at the subject as you do."

"Try him. It is an honest end you are seeking; why flinch from the trial?"

"Because I have misgivings about what I can really do."

"Oh! leave him to consider that. If you have not the same amount of experience as some others, you have ten times more ability than most."

"But I have no interest; and I know that all men situated like Mr. Peterson, are beset with applications, even from persons of rank, on behalf of their poor relations."

"Yes, and I will venture to say Mr. Peterson himself is tired enough of finding places for those who can do nothing, and do not wish to do anything but please themselves. Don't you believe that he will be really glad to have a man of sense and energy to deal with, and that he will

recognize such a man in you the moment he looks into your face?"

"No, I don't believe he will. I don't believe he will even take the trouble to look at me after he knows that I am coming to him with that never-ending want—the want of a situation. As to my looks, it was but this very day I was thinking what a down-trodden looking fellow I was growing to be."

"You had been travelling, and your mind was harassed."

"Harassed, indeed! And that is what I am likely to be for a long time to come."

"No, no, you shall not be harassed in this way with other people's cares; or if you are, I will take half, and so they shall be gently slipped off your shoulders on to mine."

"Poor child! you have already too much of your own."

"Not a whit too much. I once had a little more than I liked, but since I have known you, all things are changed to me. I seem to have found an anchor for my poor little barque; and if ever the waves grow rough around me again, I shall not be in the least afraid, I assure you."

"Not if your anchor gives way?"

"Oh! but it won't do that."

"Who knows?"

"I do. Come, come, you will not shake my confidence with all your mysterious looks. I am not afraid. You cannot make me so."

"You are very bold."

"No, not at all, generally; but I believe I am very trusting. If I had built my confidence in you upon any merit of my own, I might have had misgivings; but your kindness came to me so unexpectedly, and so without desert on my part, that I received it like some precious and free gift of God—and so indeed it is—the most precious he could have bestowed upon me."

"A little while ago, Mary, I said you were proud. This does not sound like the language of pride."

"I hope not. Unless indeed I am proud of my precious gift. And if I am, I keep it very secretly locked in the inner casket of my heart, so that it can offend no one, nor indeed become the subject of comment beyond ourselves."

"Oh! Mary, I have witnessed such misery! And I am afraid what I have

seen is only the beginning. You never saw a more beautiful, or a more sensitive creature than Grace Linden, and she was so happy before I explained to her the nature of my visit—so happy, and so confiding. Since I have had that cruel duty to perform—since I have seen what her faith and her trust were, and how they could be torn away, I seem to have lost faith and trust myself; not in you, but in all the foundations of earthly happiness. I feel also afraid to hope in anything, for if a love like that could be cherished one moment and uprooted the next, what is there on earth to build upon?"

"Perhaps it was her all."

In this manner Robert and Mary conversed together, on a subject which afforded but little consolation, and still less hope.

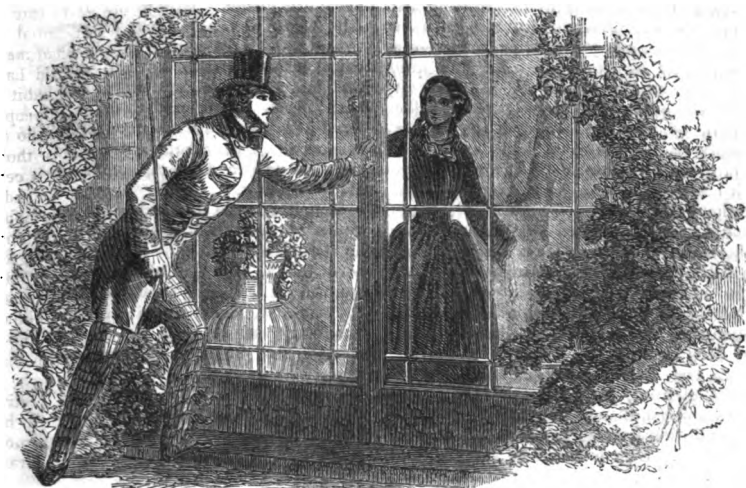
From motives of prudence, and with the idea of economising their resources, Robert Clifton had invited his brother Philip to share his own home until some plan could be devised for the better disposal of himself and his time. Had Philip been inclined to study, Robert thought that some remote residence in the country might have been obtained for him, where he might, by diligence and application, make up for time already wasted at College. But Philip had no such tastes, and a remote country residence could only have been rendered endurable to him by the indulgence of his natural inclination for sports of the field, and other amusements of an expensive nature. Even the quiet of his brother's apartments were intolerable to him, and Robert saw plainly that something must be devised for keeping his brother occupied, in order to preserve him from absolute ruin, and that of the lowest and most degrading kind.

Philip believed it was the distress of his own mind in relation to Grace Linden which made him so unsettled, and so incapable of turning his present circumstances to any good account; but Robert, who was remarkably abstemious in his own habits, could not admit this apology for his rooms being filled with the atmosphere of smoking, and for other and more expensive indulgences which, with every disposition to be kind to his brother, he could not persuade himself that he ought, under present circumstances, to allow.

Perhaps Robert Clifton was not the

most patient of men. Perhaps, too, the long trial of his own life, the early care he had had to sustain, and the self-denial he had been compelled to practise, had made him what some young men would have called austere. Indeed it is the habit of characters like Philip to think all people austere, hard, cold, and unfeeling, who do not practise in their own persons those habits of self-indulgence which, by a certain order of minds, are thought to indicate a cordial, generous, and even noble nature. So Philip thought his brother hard, and even stingy; and so there grew between them a most uncomfortable state of feeling, which both would have been glad to put an end to, had they known how. Nothing, however, could be done—nothing decided upon, until Philip had been admitted to that interview, which, as he said, was to decide his fate; for, restive and difficult as he was to do with in his brother's hands, he professed the most entire submission to the wishes of Grace Linden, whatever they might be.

For this interview Robert was almost as anxious as his brother, because he saw plainly that Philip did not realise his situation, and perhaps never would realise it, until he could see the consequences of his own conduct upon another. Men of such habits as Philip Clifton often see no reason in the world why a wife and family should be made miserable by them, until by some accident they awake from their mad dream to see what they have done. They argue with themselves, and not unfrequently with others, that they mean no harm, cherish no ill-will, and would not do an unkindness for the world; why then should any one be made unhappy by them? Philip, if required, would have gone round the world for Grace Linden, would have braved the tempests of the north, and traversed the deserts of the south. To give her pleasure, he would have sought for treasures in the bowels of the earth, or climbed untrodden heights, or ventured where never man had dared to go before. But it so happened with the lady of his love, as it does with many a weeping wife and destitute family, that the control of a selfish inclination, the refusal of a momentary indulgence, would have done more for her happiness than the enterprise of a whole life time without this.



CHAPTER XXI.

The last sad interview, *the last!*
 Ah, what a mournful word is this!
 With hope and joy for ever past,
 And closed the avenues of bliss.

PHILIP CLIFTON had no idea that Grace Linden was more than grieved or annoyed by the disgrace he had brought upon himself—perhaps a little angry, as he thought she had a right to be; and when more than one letter had reached his brother, stating that she had been very ill, and was still too weak to bear the interview, he who felt such floods of health flowing through his own veins, could scarcely believe it was anything but a sort of temper which Grace was indulging against him, and he longed the more to see her, in order that he might smoothe all these adverse influences away, and win her back to the softness of that trusting and entire affection which had been so charming to him. Alas! for such affection, if it only charms! Philip did not yet know himself, nor how far his love for Grace Linden had sunk into his heart.

"I must make my peace with her," he said to his brother one day—"I must see her, let the consequences be what they may. I cannot endure this putting off from time to time. I will go, without

permission, if the next letter does not say that I may see her."

"Ah!" said Robert, "it is not what you can or cannot endure that has to be considered."

"But I am confident," said Philip, "it would be for the good of both that we should meet. Grace herself will feel better, and happier, when I have smoothed things a little to her."

"I don't know what you expect to smoothe," observed Robert rather drily; but if I thought you really meant what you say, I should think it right to apprise her of your intention, Philip. But I don't believe you could be quite so barbarous and unfeeling as that. So good-bye. I must to business. I shall be later than usual to-day; but when I do return, I shall find that you have thought better, or at all events acted better, than you thought."

"Barbarous and unfeeling?" said Philip, repeating his brother's words as he stood with his hands behind him, leaning against the mantel-piece—"Barbarous and unfeeling!" he said again, and then he fell into a long fit of musing.

All was quiet in the house where Philip

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Clifton still remained in this musing attitude. It was unusual with him to be so long still in any position, or to ponder so long upon one thought. All was quiet without, as the streets of a great city can be quiet, for there was a muffled sound of passing feet, and rolling carriages, and all the usual hum and stir of the great hive now busily at work, and yet all blended into one great buzz of labour, rather than of life, for no single sound could be distinguished from the rest; and therefore, as many colours blended make a dull neutral tint, so the many voices, and the many footfalls of the great city were so mingled as to make a kind of humming silence not uncongenial to the occupation of deep thought.

At last, Philip made one bold step forward, planting his foot upon the ground with that peculiar firmness which indicates a resolution formed, and not likely to be given up. One moment he stopped, took out his purse, examined its contents, then put on his hat, and walked straight out of the house without leaving either note or message behind him.

Fearless as Philip Clifton would have been amidst physical dangers, his stout heart quailed within him at the thought of what he was about to do. He felt that there was something almost "barbarous and unfeeling" as his brother had said, in presenting himself unannounced, and uninvited, within a lady's bower. He felt, too, that he had undertaken an enterprise which would be very difficult to carry through, owing to the extreme care and tenderness with which Grace Linden was watched and tended, especially when labouring under the slightest symptom of indisposition. But his was not a spirit to be driven back by difficulty—rather to be impelled forward; and, glad to take advantage of the early closing in of an unusually dark day, Philip walked on immediately after leaving the coach which had conveyed him to Mr. Linden's residence, until he found himself standing by a side door, which he knew of old to open into the garden. He knew a trick, too, by which this door could be opened; and in happier times had practised this trick, to the surprise of Grace who never had been able to convince him that she was very angry with him for the unex-

pected intrusion. How would it be now? Ah! there was not more difference between the bright sunny mornings or the calm evenings when he had entered at this door before, and the storm and blackness which lay around him as he entered now, than between the smiling prospects which they both anticipated then, and the deeper darkness which obscured his future now.

Still Philip did not, and could not, altogether realise this difference, or if he did, he attributed much of it to outward things—so much, that he blamed the storm, and the cold, and the season of the year—anything, in short, which afforded him a temporary escape from the terrible conviction that he himself had been the cause.

Philip knew all the indications which the exterior of that house afforded of its internal state. "If the old library is occupied," he said to himself, "I shall know at once whether or not Mr. Linden is at home. But, indeed, he is sure to be at home in this weather; only he may be ill, or fancy himself so, and then he will be in his own room upstairs. Ah! there is a light there. Come, so far, all is well; but the room which Grace usually occupies is close to her father's—if she is very ill, she will be there, and I shall have come in vain."

Philip crept along amongst the thick evergreens, in the hope of ascertaining this fact,—for the windows of the room in question opened from a different side of the house. They were, in fact, over the old library; and here it was that he contemplated the mad project of effecting his entrance. From the windows above the library, however, he could gather no intelligence. There was, certainly, a light there, but it looked dim, like that of a fire, rather than a candle; and he confined his attention more immediately to the apartment below.

In Mr. Linden's library, as already stated, there was a window which looked out upon a lawn, enclosed on two sides within high walls, and skirted with shrubs and evergreens. This lawn lay towards the south, so that the library, even with its low opening, was considered the warmest room in the house. It had no shutters, the nature of the window rendering that

impossible; but the garden here was so secluded, so difficult of entrance, except by that one private door, that no one thought it insecure; and the deep folds of a thick crimson curtain, when drawn across the window, gave to the room an appearance of safety, and of shelter, beyond what any of the other apartments could boast.

"Now," thought Philip, "if there is no opening or crevice left in those curtains, what shall I do?"

The velvet sward of the lawn extended quite up to the window, so that Philip could approach without the least danger of being heard. Close to the panes of glass then, he applied, sometimes his staring sight, and sometimes his listening ear. But the servant, in drawing the curtains, had been very careful, and they were even folded over in the middle—nothing was to be seen—nothing heard. Patience was not one of Philip's characteristics; but he had nothing else for it now; so, folding his arms across his breast, he stood leaning against the wall, and determined not to move from that place until some sound within the room should give him intelligence of what, or who was there. Presently, however, he was startled from his position by the opening of a door. Some one entered the library, stirred the fire, moved a couch nearer to it, and then there were voices—one like the voice of a nurse, or attendant offering services, or asking questions about comfort or repose; and then there was *the* voice, so clear, so unmistakable, but oh! so sad.

"You may leave me now," said Grace Linden. "I would rather not go upstairs until my father seems more settled for the night. Indeed, I grow so weary—so very weary before morning, that I always regret when I do go early to bed. I have a book here that I wish to read. I shall do very well, if you leave me now."

"And your coffee?" said the attendant.

"I will ring when I want it," said Grace. "I feel so heavy and dull to-day. I am not sure that I shall not have a little doze; so you may just tell the servants not to come into the room until I ring."

It was impossible for Philip to listen to these directions, without a beating of his heart, so loud that it seemed to him as if

it must be heard, even through the window, far into the interior of the room. Still he could not find any opening in the curtain, and he had only to listen to the departing footsteps of that attendant, and then—

"But did," he asked himself, "did Grace speak in so sad a tone, as he had fancied it at first? No; surely it was only weariness." And then the book she was enjoying, most likely some pleasant story; *that*, he thought, looked well. No doubt, poor girl, she had been attending upon her father, and so had tired herself. In all probability the old gentleman was ill, and that had been the reason why she had not allowed him to come before.

With these agreeable persuasions, Philip waited, though somewhat impatiently. He thought the attendant was an endless time in making her mistress comfortable; but at last all seemed to be satisfactory. The fire was stirred again; and, most alarming! a sudden sweep of a female arm threw the curtains aside, in order to feel at the fastening of the window. It would not catch. The woman complained, and Grace, evidently wishing to be left in peace, promised that it should be attended to on the morrow. "For the present," she said again, in a sad weary voice, "she did not care for it. The window had been a long time in that state, and no harm had come of it."

Poor Grace! she spoke with that slight tendency to petulance, which the most amiable invalid may be excused for feeling, when sorrow of mind is added to suffering of body, and when an uncalled-for and fruitless commotion is made about things which appear, at such times, not worthy of a thought. All the terrors of the dark ages could not have made Grace Linden care at that moment whether the fastening of a window was secure or not.

Philip heard the slight impatience of her tone, and a gush of his old feeling for her came back fresh and warm to his heart; for, with all her beauty and all her excellence of heart, he had loved her scarcely more for these, than for a certain occasional freak of haughtiness, or whim, which gave, as he fancied, a tenfold charm to her character.

The arm which had been stretched out to try the fastening of the window, left no opening in the curtains after it was

withdrawn; indeed, all seemed to be even more carefully adjusted than before. There was, consequently, no chance of Philip seeing for himself whether Grace looked altered or not. Soon after this, she was left alone. He heard the departing steps of the attendant, he heard the door closed after her; and then there was a deep, heavy, weary kind of sigh, and then all was silent within the room.

Philip knew now that he must lose no time in making himself known. He could easily open the window, and make good his entrance through the folded curtains; but that was too startling a method to be thought of, so he placed himself close to the opening in the window, and spoke in a low tone, just above a whisper, the name of "Grace." The effect this word produced was instantaneous, but he repeated the name again, and, as he did so, the curtains were opened, and the pale attenuated figure of Grace Linden stood before him. She did not shriek when she saw that a man was standing close to the window. It was rather as if a sharp quick shiver ran through her whole frame, and she grasped the red curtains with one of her white hands, as if hesitating what to do.

"I must speak to you," said Philip; "let me come in?"

Grace retreated within the room, fastened the only door of the library by which a servant could have entered, and then came back to the window. Philip saw that in attempting to open it her hands shook—nay, absolutely quivered with agitation; but he had little time and feeling to spare for making observations, for in another moment he stood within the shelter of that well-known room, and Grace had sunk into a low chair, and covered her face with her handkerchief.

The strong stout man who stood there watching the slender form of the pale weeper, watched still in profound amazement, for he could not in any way account for the change which so short a time had wrought. It is true he could see little but her hands and wrists; but oh! those quivering skeleton fingers! Was that, indeed, his beautiful Grace, and the time so short since he had seen her? She must have been very ill—more ill than he had at all suspected.

Strange to say, Philip Clifton, as he

stood there gazing, did not feel any strong impulse to touch those trembling hands—they were so shadowy, and they looked so strange—what could he do with hands like those locked in his powerful grasp?

"Grace," he said, and he spoke kindly, how could he do otherwise, "Grace, you must have been very ill. Why did you not tell me how ill you were? Grace, my own Grace, just speak to me."

"What can I say?" said a sad, sad voice; and still the face was covered, and a heaving of the chest, and an almost convulsive movement of the whole form, revealed too plainly what a terrible struggle was occasioned by the very effort required to speak.

"Say anything," said Philip, "only speak to me. I want to know your wishes, I cannot live under this terrible estrangement; I want to know what I am to do, what I am to be?"

"You must go your own way," said the same sad voice; "I am going mine."

"What do you mean, Grace?"

"I mean that your course and mine, are now as widely different as heaven from—from—"

"As heaven from hell? You did not mean that, surely."

"No, as heaven from earth."

"But you are not so ill now, Grace; you are better than you have been. Do tell me that you are; you have only been ill; it is past now, you will soon be yourself again. This early winter tries you, the weather has been so severe, and perhaps you have taken cold; with good nursing, you will soon be your old self again."

Grace Linden took away the handkerchief from her face, and looked up full into the eyes of her lover. He started back, she actually smiled; but oh, such a smile! Her lips were thin and parched, and her white teeth seemed to have grown large and prominent; but her eyes were more intensely beautiful than ever, and now as their wet lashes hung heavily, they looked so dark and deep, and yet so flashing, as if with hidden fire, that any one who had known them soft and radiant, as they had looked in the past summer, might well start back, and almost question whether they were indeed

the same. Her hair, however, was not changed, except that it hung more carelessly, and in her sudden emotion, had fallen loosely over her cheeks and temples; but she put up her thin hands, and swept it back, and then the altered outline of the face became more evident, the hollow cheeks, each with its single concentrated spot of crimson, clear as a rose-leaf, and as beautiful.

And this was the work which sin alone had done—a work which sin is doing every day, it may be with the mother, the sister, or the child; it is more frequently with the wife; but the work is the same, whether the cheeks be young or old, lovely or otherwise. It is the same wherever love to God and love to guilty man have to fight their terrible death-conflict in the torn human heart. And men call this work by many gentle names, such as pleasure, weakness, or at worst they call it folly; and they say, while pursuing it, that they injure no one but themselves, and would not do a positive unkindness for the world. Look then again, young lover, at the flower thus stricken in its early bloom, and tell us, if this, thy work, be injuring no one,—tell us what unkindness is?

Philip Clifton felt a sensation bordering upon absolute fear, as the large full eyes gazed upwards to his face, and then drooped again, overshadowed by their snowy lids. He dared not either touch those white thin hands; they did not look as if they could ever welcome any mortal touch again. Strange and fearful was the alteration which a few short weeks had wrought,—most strange. For now the man of pleasure stood aloof, feeling as if he could have nothing in common with one whose sole business seemed to be with eternity and with the grave. Ah, that was the secret cause; they were going two different ways, and one was going fast, passing away from all the familiar associations, which to him were everything, passing away to those unknown regions which had hitherto been scarcely so much as dreamed of by him. And sin had done this work; how could it be otherwise? No human soul, knit though it may be to the strongest frame, could bear to be torn betwixt these two extremes,—love to a holy God, and to a guilty man. One

must give way; the higher the appreciation of purity and love, and holiness, as connected with the Divine image, and with the blessedness of the heavenly state; the deeper the gratitude for the great work of man's redemption, the more intense becomes the hatred and the loathing of sin as an offence to this purity, a breach of this gratitude, as tending downwards from this high holiness, and cruelly casting back this perfect and illimitable love. What then can be done?—a wrench from one hold or the other must take place, and in the endurance of this terrible wrench, how many suffer slowly a long living death. Happy they, who of more fragile mould, die quickly, and so pass away, their sorrows buried with them in an early grave.

It was scarcely possible, at first, for a man like Philip Clifton to feel all the tenderness which her situation demanded for the delicate and suffering creature whom he now beheld; so strange was the effect produced by her altered appearance upon his feelings; strange, almost as the aspect of death itself. He had not expected to find anything but languor, feebleness, and perhaps weeping and emotion at the sight of him; but these, he had felt no doubt, would give place to joy. In fact, he had been secretly anticipating a welcome as warm as ever awaited the most deserving of lovers. What to make of the reception he now met was a great enigma, as well as how to interpret those signs of deep anguish, upon which he could not close his eyes, for they were, alas! too palpable. He began to fear that there was something more real in this grief, something more fatal in this malady, than he could account for; he began to fear—oh, what a host of grim terrors crowded upon him—he began to fear that this was his own work.

“Speak to me, Grace,” said he, “do speak to me; tell me why you are thus changed, and how?”

Grace was evidently struggling with herself, for she seemed to wish to speak, if only she could conquer her tears. At last she removed the handkerchief from her face, and motioned for Philip to sit down beside her. Then she stretched out her thin fingers, as if feeling for

something. He clasped her hand in his, her parched and burning hand. He had been so accustomed to associate the ideas of life and health, and vigour with the human frame, that the hot hand even, startled him, as it lay within his own like a burning coal; and while his great heart fainted within him, he said in a tone that was softened almost to the voice of a woman. "Are you *very* ill, Grace?"

"I don't feel any pain, Philip," said the parched lips, with a smile more sad than tears, "not any pain of body."

"Only weakness?" Philip asked.

"Only I am dying, Philip."

"No, no, Grace, you shall not die; I will not let you die."

"You?"

"I will come and live near you, Grace. I will see you often, and nurse you, oh, so tenderly."

"You?"

"Yes, I; has any one so great a right to be near you, to care for you, and comfort you?"

"You comfort me?"

"Yes, I. What can you mean, Grace? What makes you speak to me in that way?"

"Is it possible, Philip, that you do not understand?—that I need explain myself in words?"

"Yes, speak out, Grace, and tell me all. I have come to hear it. I will hear whatever you may say."

"Oh! I have nothing to tell you, Philip, beyond what you can see. I don't want to reproach you; but these hands—and this fever that is eating my life away, don't you understand *that*, Philip?"

"You have caught cold, Grace, and the winter is too severe for you."

"I don't feel the winter. I never knew it was cold, Philip, until I heard about you."

"Ah! you feel my disgrace too much. But I do assure you I have had great injustice done me. Others were far more culpable than I was—all the world knows that, only they wanted to make an example of some one, and the luck fell upon me."

"But, Philip, I don't mean that so much. The cruel thought to me is this—that you never were, even when we were most intimate—you never were perfectly

open with me. In short, you never were exactly what I believed you to be—you never were fit to enter the church."

"No more are thousands who do enter it."

"That does not make the case better to me. You knew the high ideas which I attached to that office. You knew the pictures I was forming for our future. You knew the deep reverence I cherished, and still cherish, for all that is pure and holy in the sight of God and man."

"I told you I was unworthy, but that I hoped, under your influence —"

"You never told me *how* unworthy, Philip."

"But you know now, Grace, thanks to a telltale brother."

"Yes, I know now; and I thank your brother, whether you do or not."

"You thank my brother?"

"Yes."

"Then, you never can have loved me, Grace, as I love you. Do you believe I would not have murdered the man who should have come to me with foul slanders against you?"

"But this was not slander, Philip, which your brother came with; it was the simple truth—the hard and cruel truth."

"And you applauded him for it?"

"I thank him, and accept the duty he performed as a real kindness."

"Indeed!"

"Come, Philip, we have not many more minutes to spend together. This—this will, in all probability, be our last meeting on earth."

"What do you mean, Grace?"

"I mean, that something has struck me with a fatal blow; and I mean, as I told you before, that I am dying. But let that pass. I want to talk to you, Philip, a little while, if you will give me strength. I said, we had not many more minutes to spend together, and I do not want to waste them in idle, still less in bitter words. If anything had been wanting to convince me that I had been deceived in you, it would be the proud, unforgiving manner in which you now speak. Yes, Philip, this is so unlike you, at least what I had imagined of you—oh! so unlike the being I have loved, that I almost wonder at my own blindness. Only it has done me a great good, Philip."

"What is that?"

"It has made me more willing to die."

"How so?"

"By convincing me, that you are not the man with whom I ever could have been happy—*rightly* happy, I mean—happy in the sight of God. And yet, Philip, those did seem very happy days, when we wandered through the woods and fields together."

"Ah! Grace, they *were* happy days."

"They will never come again, Philip,—to one of us, at least. But, as I said before, let that thought pass—it has no bitterness to me; at least, I think not much. The bitterness will come, perhaps, when you are gone. I scarcely feel it now. I should like to die in this way, Philip, close beside you, and with my head resting on your shoulder—so."

"Grace, you shall live in that way; you must—you *shall* live! I will take you to some genial climate,—away, away from all this wicked world; and there I will live for you,—and you alone!"

"I am going to a genial climate, I believe, Philip, and that soon."

"Ho? where? Who is going with you?"

"I am going alone, Philip. Every one must go alone who travels the journey which I am taking."

"Grace! Grace! you must not talk to me in that way; you will drive me distracted."

"No, we will speak of other things—yourself, Philip, that is the subject I want to talk to you about. My journey is a short one, and one that I must tread alone; but you—"

"Oh! if I am to be thus wholly separate from you, it is of no use speaking about my future. Indeed, I have no future, only as you are associated with it."

"I believe you think so now, Philip; the shock of finding me as I really am seems so unexpected to you. And yet I wonder why it should. You know how busy death has been beneath my father's roof; you know the constitutional malady which we all had to fear; and I have told you often, how ill-prepared I was, both in mind and body, to bear any heavy stroke. This *has* been a very heavy stroke to me, Philip, and a very cruel one too. But I

don't want to reproach you. Rather let me go on to say a few words to you on subjects more important than my poor self. Rather let me tell you some of the grave thoughts which have been my companions since this sad stroke fell upon me. The gravest of these, Philip, have been connected with you."

As Grace Linden said this, she drew her slender arm around the neck of the strong man, and, looking full into his face, her lip quivered for an instant, as if overpowered by a sudden gush of tenderness; and with her eyes still looking sadly into his, she said, "My poor, poor love, if you should be lost eternally! Only think—if my wandering spirit should search through heaven, and never find you there! These thoughts have lately been brought very near to me, Philip. I have had to think of the *reality* of heaven, of all the blessed truths contained within this holy book; and then I have had to think of the condition of lost spirits, outcasts from the love of God, aliens from all purity and all peace. Oh, my poor love; if you should be one of these! The world is very wicked, people say, and, no doubt, you have found it so? Indeed, it must be so, or how could you so far have fallen? In such a world, and weak as you have found yourself to its temptations, how can you ever hope to be a child of God, unless you lay these blessed truths to heart. Perhaps that heart will feel very desolate sometimes, when I am gone. I think it will; and something you will sadly want for consolation. Oh! take this holy book, and read it for my sake—read it every day, and pray, when you read, that your eyes may be opened to its real meaning, your soul awakened to its truth. Here is a little Bible, Philip, so small that you can keep it always near you. It is beautifully bound, you see, and very elegant. You know I always had a fancy for things elegant and beautiful. Say 'Poor Grace Linden gave me this,' and read it. Yes, read it often and prayerfully, for her sake."

Philip had not been able to resist the pressure of that slender arm around his neck; neither could he look into those soft, appealing eyes without big gushing tears flowing fast from his own. Ah! at that moment, what would he not have

given to have been able to unclóthe himself of the old, the hated self, and to be in reality a fit companion for the pure and gentle creature, whose head he would have pillowed on his breast!

But no; Grace had much to say. She could not—dared not yield herself to this weakness. It would have been but too pleasant, could she have lulled her conscience, and deceived her judgment, to lean again upon that warm, fond heart, and to feel that she owed her comfort to his kindness, her strength to his support. But the time for that was gone by, now. She had leaned, and her support had given way,—nay, had actually betrayed her; for it had been false, even while she trusted. The present and the future was all she dared to think of now; the present little speck of time into which must be crowded all she had to say, to feel, to hope, and to fear, in relation to him whose life had so recently been bound up with hers; and the long, long future, with all its incalculable perils and vicissitudes—the long, long future, through which she would never more be near him, to whisper in his ear the warning of a wife, a sister, or a friend.

"Philip?" she said again, "you will take this little book, and read it for my sake?"

"I will," said a low, broken voice; "but we are not going to part, Grace?"

"Yes, we are, Philip. I shall never be able to see you again. Even now, the effort almost costs me my life. Look here!" she said, removing her handkerchief from her mouth.

He looked. Her lips were streaked with blood. He started up and would have called for assistance, but she motioned him to be still.

"It is often so with me," said Grace; "the least disturbance of mind will bring it on. It came on the night after I heard those sad tidings of you. Don't mind it, Philip, dear. It costs me no pain, only a little faintness. Give me that glass of water. Now I shall be better again, love. Ah! no, I see you don't like to be near me now. Never mind, Philip, I don't feel the least hurt, only—only—"

Poor Grace! her eyes were growing dim as she spoke, and she fainted quite away. Supporting her in his arms, Phi-

lip could not reach the bell so as to summon the domestics, and before he was able to do so, he recollected that the strangeness of his position might awaken more curiosity than he wished to meet. Besides which, he soon perceived, in the pallid cheek which he laid so carefully on the pillow of the sofa, a faint tinge of returning life, and soon the large, full eyes were opened again, and fixed upon his face, while a faint smile of astonishment played about the lips.

"Where have I been?" said Grace, glancing round her, as consciousness returned. "Oh! I understand all, now. Oh! yes; I understand all. How long have I been fainting?"

Philip told her she had been only a very few minutes insensible, and she appeared to be relieved,—for the idea of time flying quickly, and all she had to say not being said, seemed to trouble her exceedingly.

"Let me see," she said; "what were we talking about? Oh, yourself, dear Philip. What are you going to do?"

"It is impossible for me to say—anything that you advise."

"Well, then, don't go into the church."

"If that be your wish, I am sure it is mine."

"But don't, for this reason, become more willing to cast yourself away. You can serve God as well elsewhere; and none should meddle with holy things who cannot do so with clean hands. I will tell you what I think you should do."

"Yes, tell me—tell me all."

"All—I cannot tell you; but there is the little book, you know, that will tell you all. Well, do not wait till I am gone. It will spare you much pain to go soon, to get out of the country—quite away, where everything is different, and where you will find it easier to begin a new life."

"I believe you are right."

"Yes; and I have had a good deal of time to think of these things. I was going to write to you on the subject; but every time I sat down to the task this attack came on. Now, you believe me, Philip; now you believe that I shall not be long for this world?"

This was all Grace Linden could say. Again her senses failed her; and thus they parted, never to meet again on earth!



CHAPTER XXII.

Farewell to home, and sympathising friends,
The dear old pleasures of her early days;
Unto strange scenes her lonely course she wends,
Where duties all are new, as are the ways.

In a very short time after his interview with Grace Linden, Philip Clifton was gone—away upon the wide seas. It was neither his own wish nor that of his friends, that he should remain long; for what was there for him to do in England? and whatever sorrow he might leave behind him, could only have been increased and deepened by his presence.

To his brother Robert, it was especially a relief; for to him, more than to others, the danger of Philip's situation, as well as the difficulty of his success in any regular employment, had been apparent. He was gone, then, to make trial of a new life in a new world. Whatever hope there might be for him, Robert believed would await him there. With this belief he had acted towards him a true brother's part, furnishing him with all the means which it was in his power to raise, as well as obtaining for him many introductions and recommendations which he thought likely to be advantageous in his new career. He had not gone out a disgraced

or neglected man; and the feeling he took with him, if he felt at all, must have been one of strong conviction that he had been kindly and honourably dealt with. Whatever feelings he entertained besides—whatever thoughts weighed on his mind, as he traversed the lonely ocean, in relation to himself, and the use he had made of his many advantages, were, in all probability, locked silently within his own breast, for he was situated entirely amongst strangers, and all the friends he might find in future would be as new to him as the world he was seeking.

It is probable that nothing would have induced Philip Clifton to adopt this plan, although it had ever been a favourite one with him, had not the increased illness of Grace Linden rendered it impossible for him to see her again. Indeed, it was her own wish that he should go—a wish which had been expressed and repeated to his sisters with so much earnestness, that they were brought to believe it would be conducive even to her own peace of mind, that he should leave his native country altogether.

After mature consideration, and after many serious consultations with Cath-

rine, who became her almost constant attendant, Grace Linden had seen clearly that nothing could be done for Philip in England, where, besides his inability to conduct any responsible kind of business, he would be continually exposed to temptations which he had proved himself unable to resist. For herself, she had nothing left to hope, or to desire in connection with him. The interview already described, which had cost her so much, she knew must be the last; and such being the case, it could afford her no satisfaction to know that he was still within her call; for if he had even stood at the door of her chamber, she would not have found strength sufficient to sustain the shock of another meeting.

Indeed, the strength which had been so sorely tried, wasted rapidly away — so rapidly, that none of Grace Linden's friends, except Catherine and her sister, knew, or could have imagined, the real cause. They thought it was accidental—that hæmorrhage from the lungs had come on in consequence of cold taken in the commencement of the winter; and that the constitutional malady of the family had thus been brought on. Many there were, of course—many wise people, who said they knew all along that the malady was there; and that when Grace Linden's marriage was talked of, *they* could have told her friends that she was destined never to behold her bridal day.

Of course, this wisdom, and this eagerness of prophecy on the part of Grace Linden's friends, assisted very much in concealing the real circumstances of her case; and so far Catherine was not unwilling to encourage the idea to which they pertinaciously held. Against the conduct of Philip Clifton, too, whatever it had been, when surrounded by other scenes, no one in the neighbourhood of his parents' home could bring the slightest charge. It was better, therefore, for Grace, and for all, that the dark secrets which had cost her her life, so far as she was concerned, should go with her to the grave. Even her father knew nothing beyond the fact of her illness—that was enough for him. It absorbed for a time his whole being, and left him neither interest nor curiosity to inquire about other things.

Thus, then, in this quiet and secluded household, there was transacted—wholly unknown to the little busy world without—one of those deep domestic tragedies by which the grave is peopled, and the sick-chamber made a nursery for loveliness and youth.

It was a happy circumstance for Catherine Clifton, and afforded just that exercise of her kindly feelings for which she pined, that Grace preferred her society to any other, and, indeed, was never so well satisfied as when Catherine was near her. It was but little that any friend could do—but little that a sister could offer to repair the ruin which her brother had wrought; but it was a blessed thought to be permitted to do that little, and to feel, as Catherine did, that she had the heart and the hand to do it, perhaps, more effectually than any other person.

"You see, dear mother," she said sometimes on her hasty visits to her home, "if I had gone away to fill the place of a governess, I could not have attended upon poor Grace. Some time or other you will have to confess that I was right; for, after all, you see I was intended for a nurse."

Mrs. Clifton, as well as others of her family, acknowledged her satisfaction in the fact that Catherine could supply the place of nurse to her poor suffering friend, who, having neither mother, nor sisters, was peculiarly in want of female companionship and care. It is true she had every attention from the domestics of her father's household—often a little too much, so as to weary her fainting spirit with their officious kindness; but Catherine knew well how to amuse and serve, at the same time, without betraying that she had any design in doing either; and no sooner had she resumed her place in the sick room, than the patient seemed almost to forget that she was ill; or rather, she ceased to feel that she was any longer the subject of that watchful attention, which, far more than their own bodily sufferings, often distresses the feelings of a nervous patient.

Catherine, too, knew all the secrets of the gentle heart which she tried so kindly to soothe and to sustain. There was no sad history to be told between them. The saddest and the darkest part was told, and

had been wept over, until they seemed, as if by tacit consent, to have agreed that they would weep no more. As is frequently the case under similar circumstances, the bitterness of the grief was almost wept away. As is frequently the case, and, oh! how merciful that it should be so! the dying sufferer was enabled gently to lay down her earthly burden, as she grew less and less capable of bearing it. Not that she forgot—no; far from that. The thought was ever present with her; but she could do nothing now but pray; and daily, almost hourly, lifting up her heart to Him whom she knew to be all powerful to save, she came at last to feel that her load was lightened in a way she could not understand; and so sank patiently and humbly into a state of perfect peace—so quiet, so submissive, so childlike in its simple trust, that Catherine, as she watched the expression which this state of feeling imparted to the countenance, manner, and conversation of her friend, was often startled by a sudden gush of tenderness which compelled her to turn away in order to conceal her tears.

It seemed as if the great struggle of Grace Linden's life had been endured at once; as if never more after that terrible crisis in her fate had the silken cords which bound her to this world been tied again, or the golden bowl restored. After that terrible crisis she had nothing more to contend with—nothing further to lose. By one fearful wrench her entire hold of earth had been torn away, and she never afterwards spoke of the world as holding any place or part in it, nor of the things of time, as having any relation to herself.

In fact, it was a beautiful feature in Grace Linden's character during the whole of her illness, that she spoke little, and scarcely seemed to have the accustomed amount of thought, about herself; and this was the more remarkable, because of the vast amount of attention which every little want and wish of hers had been accustomed to call forth. It was the more remarkable, because, before this illness, Grace might have been thought by some who judged her habits, rather than her heart, to have a little tendency to be requiring, though never more so than was most welcome; for anything she asked of others was asked so graciously, and so

thankfully received, that no one could feel the trouble it imparted so great as the pleasure of acceding to her wishes.

While Catherine was thus employed in attendance upon her friend, the important intelligence reached the two sisters, that a situation was open to the acceptance of Helen. A strange sensation accompanied the announcement of this intelligence, as may well be supposed; for it was the first step in life towards making that somewhat perilous experiment of woman's independence. Mrs. Clifton looked upon it as the first step towards the downfall of the family. Helen would not allow that it was so: she called the experiment by all the dignified names which could be applied to it; and yet her cheek flushed, and her eyes glistened; and Catherine, as she watched her, saw that her hand trembled when she sat down to write the formal letter which indicated her willingness to accept the duties proposed to her, and her hope that she should be able to discharge them satisfactorily.

Ah! if those who receive a governess into their family could sometimes see the leave-taking which attends her first departure from her father's house, it would perhaps be better for both parties that the gain to one should be a little more measured than it often is by the loss which the other has to sustain. If they could behold all the honour, as well as the affection bestowed upon the outfit of the solitary wanderer about to travel to an untried home; the tenderness of parental love that clings more fondly to its household treasure, just in proportion as its light begins to fade away from the domestic hearth; the tears of sisters, never separated before, but with the joyful and exulting thought that they could meet again at their own pleasure, and return at any hour to fill their wonted place in the bright circle of their home; if these, and all their attendant manifestations of long-cherished feeling could be fully understood by those who receive the desolate stranger who offers, for the first time, her services for hire, we fancy the welcome of the stranger would sometimes be a little warmer than it is; and we fancy, too, that subsequently there would be less wonder and complaint that the heart of the stranger cannot be altogether thrown into

her new pursuits, nor made to thrill and glow as it did at home on behalf of those who have but received her as a hireling, and are ready any moment to part with her as such.

Many women have gone forth from honourable homes with the same noble purpose as Helen Clifton took with her from hers; but few can have been more tearfully attended upon to the last, or more regretted when a parent's door has closed upon their departing steps. Helen herself wept less than the others. It was *her* purpose—*her* determination to go; and therefore she felt it her duty to support those who would be left behind. Whatever she might have to suffer was self-imposed. Whatever difficulty she might meet with was undertaken by her own free will. It would have been a weakness, of which she was not likely to be guilty, had she sunk and given way at last. No. In the midst of her sorrowing family, Helen was the comforter. Whatever of bright or cheering was to be anticipated in her future lot, Helen was the one to point it out to them. They had found unjust requirements in the letter which Helen had received, with cold, harsh expressions, and innumerable traits of character, such as their beautiful and beloved Helen ought not, as they said, ever to be subjected to; but she, on the other hand, had found open, straightforward, honest dealing, or at all events, what looked like it, and she had pointed out with great exultation one circumstance which they seemed to have no power to appreciate—the salary—the all-important salary, which none of them could deny was tolerably handsome, though they were far from looking upon it as equivalent to Helen's deserts.

All these arguments and conflicts had to be gone through again and again, and still the family were no better reconciled to their loss; only from knowing so well what was Helen's habitual firmness of character, no serious attempt was made to divert her from a purpose which had been so deliberately formed.

Thus it was, then, that the eldest daughter of the Clifton family departed from her father's house to seek a home with those who had never heard her name, nor knew, nor cared to know, the circum-

stances of her family, only so far as the habits of her past life might render her more or less fitted for the duties required at her hands. It was no fault of theirs, that they neither looked for, nor perceived on her arrival the trace of recent tears upon her beautiful cheeks. It was no fault of theirs, if the general air and manner of the *young person* impressed them at first as being a little too high and independent for a governess. It was no fault of theirs, if the surpassing beauty of Helen's face and form, struck them at first as being more than they had bargained for, or should exactly know what to do with. They had advertised, and stipulated for, a certain amount of services; all the rest, whatever it might be, came upon their hands as superfluous at best; they wished it might not, also, prove inconvenient and embarrassing.

Such was the entrance upon her new life of one who had hitherto been not only a recipient of the tenderest affection, but the pride of her father's house. Under such circumstances, then, we leave Helen Clifton to pursue the path of a governess, and to fulfil, as best she may, the many duties which that office, if faithfully discharged, must necessarily include.

Turning again to the home which Helen has left, we find it very desolate; for Catherine is still watching with unremitting attention beside the couch of her dying friend. Night and day, so far as nature could sustain her in the task, Catherine remained at her post. It was her happiness to be there; for, beyond the impulse of her natural feelings, and besides all those considerations which combined to render the task she was performing a sacred duty to her, there was a fascination about the poor sufferer herself which no feeling mind could have resisted; and, once installed into office beside the pillow of a dying friend, the very nature of woman seems to keep her there, as the highest privilege she can enjoy. Nor is it friendship alone which makes this holy duty so delightful to perform. The sufferer herself can make it so, even where there has been no great amount of interest or attachment before. To an attendant even more indifferent than Catherine, Grace Linden would soon have endeared herself, not by any attempt to do so, for, with her,

all design, all effort, was at an end. It was the outpouring of her full heart which flowed unbidden in the sweet language of gratitude and love; it was the tender sympathy expressed in words and looks, and gentle ways towards those for whom she seemed to feel the more because of the long journey they might yet have to travel, before, like her, they would approach their final rest; above all, it was her holy converse, lifting, as it were, the souls of those who listened, out of the low dull things of earth, and leading them along with her, to feel and see the vastness and the worth of things eternal. It was all this which made the darkened chamber of the invalid a place of light to those who sat beside her; it was all this which made the hours of patient watching, otherwise so wearisome, seasons of deep joy, and blessed rest, and sacred spiritual communion, never to be forgotten in all the after years of life.

There are some characters who would seem to have lived almost in vain, if it were not for their death. And thus it was with Grace; lovely as she had ever been in life, her calling in the world appeared simply to have been that of awakening love in others, and calling forth their admiration.

So far her existence was a good to all who knew her, for we are always the better and the happier for loving and admiring those who deserve it. But now, in her last passage to the grave, that passage which is sometimes so dark and so unlovely, a glory seemed to rest upon her brow, a light beamed from her eyes, and a beauty almost celestial played around her lips. Why should it have been otherwise? for, ever as they spoke, they told with gratitude intense of hopes and joys, and blessed promises of heavenly truth; and, above all, they spoke in tones of never-failing confidence of that divine Redeemer, who left the realms of bliss to walk the meanest paths of earth, and who lived and died and rose again to save a guilty and rebellious world.

Of these great truths her lips were often murmuring in soft tones of gratitude and joy, even when breath seemed wanting to give her sweet thoughts fuller utterance; and when her lips were silent, there was still the look of holy joy,—the simple, child-like love and truth impressed upon

every feature of her beautiful countenance; so that those who watched knew that the feeling was still there, even through long seasons of weakness and oppression, caused by the nature of her disease.

Yet, after all, Grace forgot nothing which belonged to the world in which she was still lingering. She forgot nothing of her lost love, only that the burden of it was entirely taken away: the poisoned arrow had been extracted—the wound had been healed, and no agony was now left to rankle in its place.

Yes; it was quite evident that Grace forgot nothing; for she spoke to Catherine, —and it was a great satisfaction that she could so speak—of the winds and the storms which might be supposed to affect the passage of one who sailed upon a distant voyage. She spoke of the scenes of that far country to which he was bound; and she listened with deep interest to all the intelligence which Catherine could bring her relating to the climate, the state of society, and the general condition of things there. All this she could listen to, and even speak of, herself, with a hopeful kind of interest which afforded fresh evidence, every time she did so, that her own share in it was that of one who remains to be a well-wisher only, and has no longer any portion in the things of earth.

Once—it was when the depth of the winter was passed, and the gales of February blew terrifically, as if that stormy season had been loath to resign its reign of terror on the earth—once, as the two friends were alone, and listening, late at night, to the howling of the tempest, Grace asked, suddenly—"Catherine, do you ever hear of your brother Seymour now?"

It was a question which startled Catherine; because, by a strange but not unfrequent coincidence, her own thoughts were silently engaged on the same subject. Perhaps, too, it startled her the more, from the fact of no intelligence having reached the family after Seymour's departure, although the route of the vessel in which he sailed was one which would have rendered it easy for him to send tidings to his friends.

"I wish we could hear from him," said Catherine; "I don't feel at all easy about his silence; and these storms remind me painfully of the many dangers to which he may be exposed."

"Ah!" said Grace, while a faint smile played about her features, "you were telling me just now that one brother was, most likely, safe; because these storms were far away from him. How is it, Catherine, that you fear for the other, who must, by this time, be still more distant?"

"It is not," said Catherine, "that these particular storms can frighten me on Seymour's account, only by association. But I always fear for poor Seymour—always shrink for him—because I know him to be of so shrinking and sensitive a nature himself. It was so in our childhood. Much as I loved this precious brother, I early learned to feel him a source of constant anxiety, owing to the suffering which his peculiar nature seemed destined to endure. And then, to think how he has been situated!"

As Catherine said these words, which were more expressive of deep feeling than she thought, a moment afterwards, ought to be spoken in that secluded chamber, she bent down her head, to hide the involuntary tears that glistened in her eyes; and then, endeavouring to busy herself with some work which she held in her hand, she tried to speak on other subjects. But it would not do: all her attempts proved fruitless; and the two friends soon found themselves returning to the same theme.

"I think," said Grace, after a short pause in the conversation, "that Seymour should have been the one in your family to devote himself to the church. He would have made an excellent clergyman."

"Yes," said Catherine: "in that congenial sphere of interest he might have been a good and a happy man."

"Surely," said her friend, "he may be a good man anywhere. God is equally present with him, you know, dear Catherine, in one situation as in another."

"I know it," said Catherine; "and I feel no doubt that Seymour knows it too; but when I look at my brothers now, and recal what they were in early life—and then when I think what they might have been, I cannot escape from the painful conviction that Seymour should have been in Philip's place, and Philip in Seymour's."

"Yes, Catherine, I see it so now, though I once thought differently; but don't let

us blame any one, or entertain hard thoughts when these convictions come upon us."

"No, Grace, I think I can answer you clearly on that point now. Once, I confess, I did think hardly of my parents, and especially of my poor mother, for persisting in this great mistake."

"But it was all well meant, Catherine."

"Yes, it was all well meant, and whatever was done in the disposal of her children, was done with the very kindest intentions towards all."

"All of us, you know, Catherine, have been guilty of great mistakes in one way or another; myself, perhaps, more so than any of you: but I blame no one for this, perhaps I scarcely blame myself."

"Why should you?"

"Why should I? except as a matter of worldly prudence,—there, indeed, I was wrong; but otherwise, I see so much good that is likely, by God's blessing, to grow out of my mistake, that I could scarcely wish the past back again, even if I could have it so, in order that I might act more wisely for myself. You see, Catherine, I was not very fit for this world, if I had remained in it. I should most likely have been vain and selfish, and too much disposed to rest in the externals of religion, without any deep experience of its heart-searching influence upon the thoughts and the actions of daily life. No, Catherine, even your kind, loving heart will have nothing to regret, if, through what has passed, you should some time find me amongst those who have come out of much suffering, and who stand beside the throne, having washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb. I can see it all now, Catherine,—all the wisdom, all the mercy; and I can bless the hand by which the chastisement was inflicted."

"And my brothers, Grace—my poor brothers!"

"God is all-merciful—Christ all-sufficient. I know no other argument to bring against your fears; I have found no other consolation."

"I wish you could impart more of this blessed consolation to me, dear Grace."

"Ah! it will come to you with more clearness and more force when I am gone, Catherine."

"It is then that I fear my great weakness will come."

"Why so?"

"Because when I am near you, I feel all you say with double force, seeing the reality exemplified every moment of your life. Yes, dear Grace, weak as you are—trembling and delicate as you seem to me, like some flower of spring, which the rude winds assail; yet here, upon your sickbed, you are to me like a tower of strength. Nay, do not smile; it is all quite true, dear Grace; and if you question your own strength, remember what you have just told me, that God is all-merciful—Christ all-sufficient; and do you not think our gracious heavenly Father may sometimes, according to his own good pleasure, select the weakest of his children to be the support of the strong?"

"Weakest indeed!" said Grace, "weakest indeed!" she repeated, as with clasped hands she sank completely exhausted upon her pillow. The effect of sustaining any lengthened conversation was now becoming too much for her rapidly-decreasing strength; and after speaking on any subject which, like the present, interested her feelings deeply, she would remain for some time speechless and motionless, except that often, when too weak to give any other expression to her feelings, her lips might be seen to move with the silent language of prayer, while her eyes would be raised with such a sudden flash of intelligence, and such an intensity of love and joy, that to the beholder it seemed almost as if heaven was opening to her view, with all the blessedness of its inhabitants, and all their peace and happiness made manifest.

And now, conveyed by the telegraphic influence of mind on mind, we will leave for awhile the sick chamber, with its solemn silence unbroken, and pursue the chain, which had been touched with so much feeling, far across the mighty ocean—far away to distant regions of the globe, where the skies that smiled were, indeed, unlike the dark scowling of that wintry season, which had awakened in the hearts of the two friends the expression of anxious solicitude on the part of one—of faith, and trust, and even hopeful confidence on the part of the other.

However fanciful this flight may be, it so happened that, either at the precise time, or about the period, when the two friends talked together as already described, Seymour Clifton was passing through a crisis of his history, most important in its own nature, as well as in its consequences. Whether from the long hidden conflict of his own feelings, or whether from outward circumstances, of which, from the very intensity of these feelings, he had taken no notice at the time, his health, from the period of leaving his native shore, had been considerably affected by symptoms which, although of no very critical nature in themselves, gave reason to apprehend that the general tone of his constitution was becoming rapidly enfeebled from some cause which baffled medical skill to account for.

In this condition, Seymour, for a considerable time, bore up with a resolution, and an energy, for which his friends at home would scarcely have given him credit. But illness of body was not one of the trials which Seymour regarded as most calamitous. Those who have become early and long habituated to mental suffering, seldom regard the afflictions of the body with any very deep distress. It was thus with Seymour; but lightly as he treated this change in his circumstances, it was impossible to conceal it from others; and the manner in which he treated it, the manly, uncomplaining way in which he faced his duties, and the hardships which they necessarily entailed upon him, served in a great degree to re-establish his character, and to endear him to his more intimate friends.

It was these friends, or rather acquaintances—for Seymour could scarcely be said to have made any friends, who watched his fading colour, and who, in the frequent momentary flush of his hollow cheek, first detected the fact, that he was taxing his strength too much. At last, the fact became apparent to all; and Seymour was fairly placed upon the sick list, as being incapable of further duty. The question then occurred, what was next to be done? Above all other things, Seymour pined to be away from the ship, and all its associations.

He had never loved them, and now he wanted his native woods and fields, in the

calm of some silent shore, where he could hear the singing of birds, and see the cattle grazing in green pastures. A slow fever was wasting his strength away, and there were moments when he scarcely could restrain the excitement which the beloved recollections of such rural scenery awakened. At such times he went back to the days of his childhood. He revisited those haunts of his early years which had been his favourite resort; above all, he sat beneath the shadow of those stately trees which had been so often the sole companions of his hours of solitary, and often melancholy thought. Whatever amount of aberration of mind there might be in these recollections, and in the gentle wanderings of thought and word which they called forth, they were so pleasant in themselves that the fever days were almost more agreeable to Seymour than the after weakness, oppressed as he then felt with the reality of the hot sun above him in a burning clime, the wide monotonous ocean all around, the narrow precincts of that prison ship, the flapping of dull sails, and the never-ceasing tramp of busy feet that trod the deck, unconscious of the weariness of that poor head which every sound and movement seemed to lacerate with pain.

In his more collected moments, Seymour had assisted those who took an interest in his fate, to devise plans for his benefit; and he had recollected that his father had a friend residing in the neighbourhood of Sydney, to whom he had been furnished with letters of introduction. It was a serious thing to throw himself, ill as he was, upon the hands of any one, and especially of one who was personally a stranger; and Seymour positively refused to place himself in so unwelcome a situation. But as the vessel was now approaching this coast, something must be done for him, and it was at last decided that he should be conveyed to the hospital at Sydney, while one of his friends volunteered to be the bearer of the letters, hoping by such means to obtain for him the friendly oversight of some influential family in the neighbourhood; so that in case of his being left behind, he would not be entirely desolate, and unfriended.

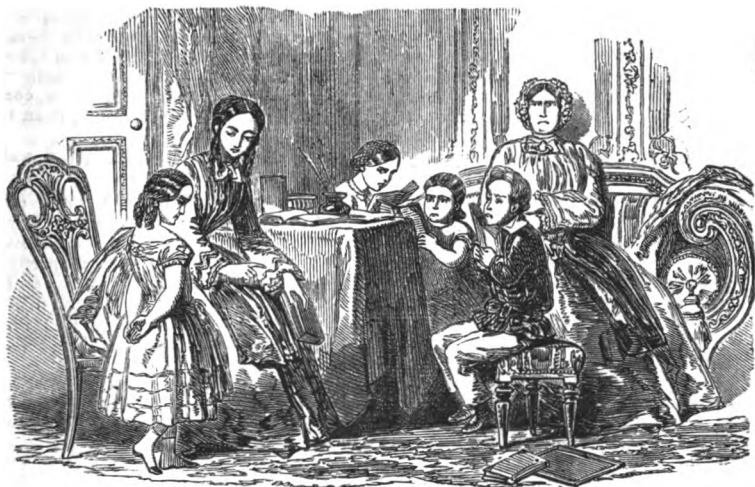
Before reaching the shore, Seymour

had become so entirely helpless and incapable of thinking and acting for himself, that it would have been easy to dispose of him in any way which his friends thought best; but his own wishes having been previously expressed, he was conveyed at once to an hospital, and there committed to the best care which such an institution could afford.

What transpired within those walls Seymour never knew, nor whether he was treated with care or consigned to neglect. Days and weeks passed over him in a state of utter unconsciousness. He might have raved, he might have uttered beloved names, and told the dearest secrets of his inmost heart; but there was no one near him to take cognizance of these facts, to remember any hint he might betray of interest more than usually intense, or to regard him in any other light than as a common patient who was struggling under a disease from which it was not likely that he would ever be restored.

And such was the situation of the delicate and sensitive Seymour Clifton, of one who was all nerve and feeling, so apt to be wounded by a rude touch, and offended by a coarse word, that the routine of life which left others unmoved, could scarcely be endured by him without shrinking, or pain. Happy was it, as regards this tendency to suffer, that Seymour knew nothing of the circumstances of his present condition, nothing of his fellow-sufferers who surrounded him, nothing of the nurses who performed towards him their daily offices of kindness or of unkindness. His spirit wandered unfettered through the realms of air, or sea, or fire, as the momentary phrenzy of the brain directed; sometimes conversing with imaginary beings, but far more frequently with those who were as real as they were lovely, and beloved.

No wonder that the electric chain of mind as it operates on mind should have been stirred betwixt these two extremes of feeling,—the poor patient raving in that far-off hospital tended by strange hands and watched by unloving eyes, and those gentle sister spirits who held sweet converse together beneath the shelter of an English home, while surrounded by all the choicest comforts which such a home can afford.



CHAPTER XXIII.

Oh, the weary, weary hours
 Passed in thankless drudgery,
 Taxing all the mental powers,
 With but little gain thereby.

To the two friends thus situated, and surrounded by all the comforts of a privileged home, the pleasant spring time came almost unconsciously, for one of them was looking for a spring which knows no summer waning to its fall—the other looked almost exclusively to what took place within the walls of one secluded chamber, where the great event which terminates all human anxieties was expected almost every day to take place.

Little thought was there, under these circumstances, for the singing of birds, or the unfolding of garden flowers. It was pleasant to the silent watcher, and yet it was sometimes more sad than pleasant, to hear the first low warbling of the happy songsters in the early morning hours. Who has not heard those tiny voices thrilling with the melody of song before the sun has fully risen, and wondered what there is in this untoward world to make those little hearts so full of joy? Perhaps we never wonder more than when, beside the bed of pain or sickness, we

watch the night-lamp pale before the dull gray light of early day—we never wonder more than when we wipe the dews of death from some beloved brow, and listen to the parted lips, hoping to catch some word of precious import, such as we may treasure up in after years, and keep enshrined with all the preciousness which one thought gives it—that of being the *last*. All things are then about to be the last, and any word thus spoken may possess this holy charm. Thus then it is that we never tire of listening with bent head and watchful eye. We never tire of holding the thin hand, of resting the poor head, of giving—and oh! what a privilege it is, thus circumstanced, to give, the cooling draught, perhaps the last those parched and burning lips will ever drink on earth!

And still the birds sing on, making their merry loves, and building their light nests upon the waving bough, as if there was no storm, nor death, nor sorrow in the world. And why should we not rejoice with them—rejoice even in the sick chamber, if the peace of God be there? Why should we not rejoice even at the near approach of death, when all things are ready—the spirit like a traveller prepared

for a long journey only bidding fond farewells, but girt with gladness and with hope, and bearing with it the true passport to a blessed immortality? No. Death is not mournful when it comes to such; and those who watch the traveller set out, having their journey yet to make, should smile instead of weeping at the thought that, just in proportion as the world is stripped and made more poor to them, heaven is more full, and rich; while amongst the friends who wait them, on the blessed shore, there is a fuller band of love, and joy, and earthly memories of things longed for, but precious still.

It is, in the same proportion, as we lose our friends by death, sweet spirits from a higher world, descended and dwelt beside us here, making our earthly sojourn so much happier—and happier still, and richer and more full, as we ourselves approached our final passage to the grave; then, truly, might we think of death as a sad messenger, and dread the summons that would call us from this world. But to all those who linger on for any lengthened period of existence here, what a tide has been setting in the other way!—how many have been called from amongst the lovely and beloved! The very flowers of earth in the full promise of their beauty often summoned first, and so destined never to unfold their fairest petals until soft airs of heaven shall have breathed into them a new and never-ending life. In this way, how much of attractiveness has gone before the aged and the weary; how little is sometimes left behind to woo or keep them lingering here. To such, looking only at the gain to natural affection, and to all those feelings which are inwoven with the old associations, and the thoughts and loves of home, death might well be supposed to be a welcome messenger, hailed with joy instead of loathing; and the grave might be supposed to be regarded as a fitting receptacle of sacred silence and secrecy, for the cast off, worn out garment for which the spirit has no further use.

In the chamber where Catherine Clifton still kept watch, there was no sadness at the approach of death except on the part of the poor father, who, however, happily for him, seemed incapable of realising his own desolate position as it was likely so

soon to be. Accustomed always to the society of the young, he attached himself to Catherine as if she had been one of his own children, while he grew even more dependent upon her than he had ever been upon any member of his own household.

"My poor, dear father!" Grace would sometimes say, "he will miss you, Catherine, even more than me. But you will come often and sit with him, and comfort him, won't you, dear Kitty?"

Catherine promised that she would do as much as lay in her power, but already she was beginning to feel that the claims of duty were likely to keep her pretty fully occupied; so much so, that she still reminded her mother at times of the mistake she had made in attempting to train her for a governess, seeing that her calling was so distinctly that of a nurse.

It was while in attendance in the sick room of her friend, that Catherine received one day a letter from her aunt of unusual length. After glancing at the signature and address, she refolded the letter to be read when more at leisure, and alone. It was well that she did so, for the contents were of a nature to shake the stoutest nerves; and she needed all the self-command, and all the composure she could summon to her aid, in the discharge of her daily duties. Life was indeed assuming a serious aspect to Catherine. Already there were demands upon her for services, such as many far advanced in years have not been required to perform. Pity, indeed, would it have been for one so ready and so able to assist in some of the most trying emergencies of life to have been occupied in a pursuit for which nature had not fitted her, and which never would have called forth the highest energies, and the warmest affections, of her character.

Here, however, in the duty which this long letter laid upon her, or rather in the kindness which it asked, Catherine's young heart did sink within her. It was so unexpected—so dreadful to contemplate! Aunt Ann, that calm unselfish woman, that true friend who always kept hand, heart, and ear, so open to the call of kindness—that woman who walked the earth with silent step, scarcely seeming to recognise her own identity, and still less her own claims to attention or regard—she whose hand was so accustomed to smooth

the aching brow, her voice to speak in tones of consolation, and her whole being to be absorbed in the consideration of others—she had long been the victim of an excruciating malady, under which there was no hope of cure, except by means almost more fearful than the malady itself.

Under these circumstances, Miss Clifton wrote to Catherine soliciting her kind assistance, and begging for her attendance in London on a particular occasion. Such a request from one who had been to her as dear and as precious as a mother, Catherine felt it impossible to refuse; and as her patient had remained for some days very much in the same state, she thought it would be quite justifiable to leave her for such a purpose, especially as her aunt had no one else to whom she could apply for assistance under her great trial. Henry Linden, too, was expected home every day, and Catherine knew that his attentions to his sister would be gentle and kind as those of a woman. Grace had no other wish on earth than to see this beloved brother. At her express desire he was returning from his travels, and in all probability they would have much to communicate that would render the presence of a third person an unwelcome intrusion.

So Catherine thought she never could be spared better than now; and, after consulting with her friends, she set out on her hasty journey to London.

But while so many clouds seem darkening around the Clifton family, let us turn to one aspect of their affairs upon which a beam of light is just now gleaming, yet gleaming so unexpectedly, that Robert, who is the subject of its influence, scarcely knows how to believe in its reality.

The reader will by this time be aware, that the early discipline of Robert Clifton's life, his long endurance of depressing and almost hopeless anxiety, had produced upon his character the effect of making him nervously apprehensive of yet greater troubles than actually fell to his share; so that, altogether, he had acquired something of the aspect and habits of a man who has become prematurely old. All this, too, was gaining so rapidly upon him, that but for the genial influence of a mind which appeared as if by the merest accident to be brought into

association with his own, he would in all probability have failed, both in hope and effort, to pursue the great struggle of his life towards anything like a successful issue.

But if we would only look for the guidance of a hand divine in these matters, how often should we see that a kind Providence is wisely re-adjusting the tangled web of our destiny, and thus repairing the mistakes which some short-sighted, but well-meaning meddler has made, perhaps in the early commencement of our career; or, what is still more probable—the mistakes which we ourselves have made in the outset of life. Thus, although Robert Clifton might have been tempted at one time to say that all things were against him, he now saw that even at the lowest point of his experience, there was unknown good immediately at hand; and blessings in abundance, growing, as it were, out of the very soil which to him looked so arid, waste, and unlovely.

Had it not been for the judicious advice of Mary Maitland, and her kind, inspiring companionship, perhaps, even more than all, her mild example of firmness, patience, and strong hope under accumulated trials, it is more than probable that Robert would have allowed his best energies to sink; so that his whole character would have wasted itself away, from the very want of an appropriate sphere of exercise. Mary saw this danger; she saw, too, that it was not Robert's natural tendency to sink, that his nature was not intended for a downward course, and that he above most men would suffer severely under a deteriorating process. It is the strong necessity of all noble natures that they must keep rising. The test of true native nobility might almost be this—whether or not a person is willing to use the effort necessary for maintaining an upward course.

We do not pretend to say that noble natures never do sink; but they, beyond others, are miserable and lost when they do. Robert Clifton would have been the most wretched of men, had he permitted himself to be reduced to this condition. Therefore it was, that Mary persevered in her arguments and entreaties, reasoning sometimes almost against reason, and certainly hoping against hope; letting him have no

rest in his despair, until, at last, to please her, much more than himself, he set out for the purpose of calling upon the man of business, whose hands were said to be so full, that it was scarcely possible to obtain a hearing from him, even by much more important and influential persons than Robert Clifton.

Of course the first application failed. Mary said it was to be expected that it should. *She* was not in the slightest degree disheartened by that, although Robert seemed to consider it a sufficient reason for giving up the project altogether.

"Who ever heard," said Mary, "of the first application to an influential man being successful? You have lost nothing by this; what, then, should stand in the way of your trying again?"

"My own self-esteem," said Robert.

"I cannot see," replied Mary, "in what your self-esteem has suffered. You have not solicited a favour—you have not asked for alms, or for the wages of idleness."

"I have not asked for anything yet."

"Then surely your self-esteem remains unhurt."

"Tell me first one thing, Mary—is it your wish that I should try again?"

"It is."

"That I should do so for your sake?"

"For any sake; only do it."

"Say for your own sake?"

"For my own sake, then, and my mother's."

"That is enough. I will go again to-morrow."

The morrow came, and Robert went again, and was again disappointed. This time he felt it less severely than before. It was in reality nothing which had happened to him, beyond the ordinary and most familiar event of calling upon an individual who happens not to be at home; but, while less depressed in spirits, and less wounded in his personal feelings, Robert persisted in believing this second repulse was an evidence that no happier issue was to be expected in that quarter.

"How unlike you!" Mary exclaimed, when she heard him utter this absurd expression,—"how unlike the manner in which you would treat such a case, had it

been in the hands of another person! Perhaps, after all," she added, "you have done nothing but call—perhaps, you have never ascertained at what hours Mr. Peterson is most likely to be seen?"

Robert confessed that he had not; and Mary exclaimed again, how unlike him it was to go about an important business matter in this hopeless, helpless manner! "Let me see," she added,—"I think you spoke of once knowing a Mr. Wilson, his private secretary. Have you seen him?"

Again Robert had to confess himself at fault.

"Well, then," said Mary, "here lies the great mistake. There can be no harm, surely, in renewing your acquaintance with Mr. Wilson, and making a few preliminary inquiries of him."

This plan did not exactly commend itself to Robert's judgment, because it was not so direct as he would have wished; but he did make the effort, nevertheless, simply to please Mary; and the intelligence he received was that Mr. Wilson no longer occupied the office of secretary. It was supposed by those who gave this intelligence, that his health had failed, and that he had gone abroad.

Mary's own resolution at last began to fail, or rather her ability to impart encouragement gave way; for there is nothing so deadening to energy and hope, as to see a strong man sinking. It was, as she had said, very unlike Robert Clifton to allow himself to sink; but his physical constitution was more affected by the circumstances of his past life, than either he or Mary were aware of; and with that his nervous system was so affected, that he had almost lost the power to hope, as well as the energy to keep himself from sinking.

Mary had but one resource left. She would urge him on the point where she knew him to be most vulnerable. For herself she now implored him to make one more effort—for her future, as well as his—for all that they had promised to themselves, and to each other, of happiness, or peace, in the long future which stretched before them. With this plea for her support, she again formed a plan in which she entreated Robert to act; and, moved by her earnestness, more than her arguments, he set out again, assuring

her that for her sake only did he make this last experiment, and that she must distinctly understand it was to be the last.

Mary agreed that it should be so. She accompanied Robert to the door, endeavouring to look hopeful and smiling as she bid him good-bye; but no sooner had she retreated into her own room, than she burst into tears, and only dried her eyes, arranged her hair, and composed her countenance, just in time to go forth at the accustomed moment to her daily duties.

It was with a heavy heart that Mary paced along her usual way this day, for she had also lost hope, at least so far as related to the project in hand. She knew that on her return that evening the event would be decided; and, for the sake of those to whom her best services were due, she endeavoured to dismiss from her mind all agitating speculations about what the result might be. Ah! how little do those persons sometimes know of what is in the heart of the teacher when they ask for more undivided attention to the initiatory lessons of some little, thoughtless child, who, for the hundredth time, perhaps, refuses to distinguish a verb from a noun.

Mary thought her little pupils were more than usually dull that day. It so happened, that the lady whose children she taught took that opportunity of sitting in the school-room, and finding more fault with Mary's method of teaching than she had ever done before. Mary could have wept bitter tears, but she had to recollect that she was not paid for weeping, that it was no part of her duty to weep, but to go on, without wasting time upon personal feeling. The children, too, always ready to take advantage of hearing those in authority found fault with, were unusually peevish, and gave themselves airs of insubordination; so that with both head and heart, Mary had enough to do that day. And one thing she did pretty frequently—she looked at her watch to see how time was going—that kind old friend who wings his faithful flight in what ever way our other friends may treat us, thus helping us in the most effectual manner through all our difficulties.

Mary looked often at her watch, and once or twice applied it to her ear, thinking it surely must have stopped, so endless seemed the lingering hours of that dull day. Kind, faithful time, however, brought the moment of liberation at last, and Mary closed her books, and kissed her little ungracious pupils, and set forth on her accustomed walk.

The way was long, but Mary would not ride. If she had had the slightest hope of any pleasant tidings awaiting her, no conveyance could have been found swift enough for her purpose; but as it was, she rather wished to prolong the distance than to shorten it; and therefore, weary as she was, for anxiety of mind makes always the saddest and the heaviest weariness—weariness as she was, then, she walked, and not very rapidly either, all the long way, arriving at her own door a few minutes later than the usual time. If the tidings she had to learn were good, Mary thought, very naturally, that Robert would have been out on the way to meet her; but no such pleasant symptom of hope awaited her return. All looked still, and death-like about the house, Mary thought, for she also was growing a little morbid, only that she seldom allowed herself the indulgence of melancholy fancies; all looked, she thought, as if the very heart of the family within the house had ceased to beat. No ready hand was upon the door to open it from within, no footstep in the hall, no glad countenance looking out from the windows, except, indeed, that the eyes of the ever-watchful Jane glanced upwards from her area prospect as she listened for the return of her beloved young mistress.

Well, that was something. The glad recognition of the servant from below, prevented the necessity of Mary's opening the door herself, and that was something, to be sure. But where was Robert? He must be cast down, and dispirited, indeed, not to be here to welcome Mary on her return.

"Mr. Clifton," said Jane, as if anticipating the silent inquiry of Mary's look, "has not come back yet. Missis thinks something must have happened."

"Nonsense, Jane," said her young mistress, starting, however, though she chided the girl; for altogether she was in a state

most capable of catching alarm from anything, and there was always something in the countenance of that servant from whence alarm could have been gathered by anyone so predisposed.

On reconsidering the subject, however, Mary thought there was some little ray of hope to be extracted from the circumstance of Robert's detention that day; for if again entirely frustrated, why should he have lingered on the spot? He might, however, have gone first into the city before returning home; and in the belief that he had done so, Mary struggled against the indulgence of any expectation, which she could not, under present circumstances, bear very well to have defeated.

Mrs. Maitland, who had to some extent been made acquainted with Robert's anticipated change of occupation, and who had from the first looked upon it as an ill-advised and hopeless scheme, believed anything but what was cheering in relation to this change. Indeed, to use her own often repeated expression, *she* knew from the first it would never answer. Nothing had answered very well with Mrs. Maitland. So Mary had to sit and hear her mother's constant moan about the hardness of their mutual lot, and the cruel privations they were compelled to suffer. And all the while this moan was uttered from the downy bosom of soft pillows, and from lips that sipped and tasted whatsoever the season, or the utmost stretch of circumstances afforded, of choice or palatable to the taste.

Mary was accustomed to this kind of moaning, and used to correct her exercises, and prepare her next day's lessons, almost as well when it was breathed forth beside her ear, as not; but this evening it tired her patience, or her nerves, and taking up a candle, she retreated to that silent, dismal apartment, high up in the house, and there seating herself before the piano, she gave vent to her feelings in a flood of harmony, which brought a sweet and almost instantaneous relief.

Many times, as Mary played and sung, her fingers suddenly rested on the keys, her voice was hushed for a moment, and her eye fixed inquiringly on empty space, as she listened for some sound below which might announce an arrival in the

hall, or on the stairs. Quick as all her senses were, however, and this evening they were doubly quick, this sound escaped her detection, and not until startled by the silent opening of the door of her apartment, which she had purposely left ajar, did Mary suspect that Robert had returned.

For good or for evil the sight of him was ever a joy to her heart, and she sprang forward to meet him at that moment, less anxious about the intelligence he might bring, than about his own safety, happiness, or peace of mind.

Robert was endeavouring to look grave, with all his might; but in spite of himself there played about the corners of his mouth an expression, which, being instantly detected, she smiled for sympathy, though wholly unconscious of the cause.

"Well," said Robert, looking as grim as he could make himself, "you seem to be amusing yourself in a very laudable manner, I must say."

"Why not?" said Mary, placing her hand upon his arm, and looking steadily into his face.

"Why not, indeed," said Robert, "seeing you have the heart to drive a poor man like me into the streets to beg my bread."

"Beggars," said Mary, "when they return, always tell their comrades what have been the fortunes of the day."

But while Mary spoke and smiled, Robert could feel that her hand, which still rested on his arm, was quivering with agitation. These were not feelings to be played with; and, leading her to a seat, he placed himself beside her; and, looking steadily into her face, said in the kindest tones of a voice which could be very kind, "Mary, you are indeed my good angel. May God reward, and bless you evermore!"

Mary had borne a good deal that day, almost as much as she was capable of bearing; but her endurance had been all of one description—harassing, wearisome to heart and mind. The little taste of joy—for she saw that it was joy of some kind or other, which lighted up Robert's countenance—this little taste of joy brought tears into her eyes, and she bent down her head to weep, but not for sorrow.

"Tell me all," she said, as well as her voice could articulate.

"Not if you weep," said Robert. "There, rest your head upon my shoulder. Give me your hand—both hands, and now listen to me, Mary."

"I am listening," said Mary. "Now go on."

"Well," said Robert, "I have better tidings for you than either you or I anticipated. I have seen Mr. Peterson. I have had a long confidential interview with him; and I am to fill the situation which Mr. Wilson lately held."

Mary raised her head, and looked full into Robert's face.

"Yes, it is all true," he said. "It seems the great man remembered me, which was more than could have been expected."

"I thought he would," said Mary.

"Yes; and he had also been aware of my fruitless calls; and when I came moping and murmuring home to you, Mary, making your poor heart so heavy and sad, he was lecturing those about him for not having kept me waiting until he was at liberty; and to-day, when I went out again, more like a street-beggar than an honest, independent man, I found that he had left a note for me, in case I should call again, and in that note had expressed his desire to see me on important business. Now compare all this, Mary, with the crest fallen, down-hearted fool that you sent forth to seek his fortune this very day, and see what a bargain you have made for yourself in linking your fate with such a man."

"See, rather, what a good God we have watching over us, making up for our deficiencies, and blessing us in spite of ourselves."

"See, also, what an angel of good woman can make herself to man, when she builds up what is best and most noble in his nature, and *will not let him sink*."

"But are you quite sure, Robert? Is it all, *really* as you tell me?"

"All, as sure and as real as the word of an honourable man can make it. I have told Mr. Peterson how I am circumstanced, and he has given me a month from this time to settle my affairs in the city, which I shall then leave in the hands of Smithson. There is a project for some public works

in Belgium; and it may happen that Mr. Peterson will have to spend the summer on the continent."

"And your salary? See what a mercenary wretch I am, Robert."

"Why, actually, I have trusted that to him."

"And you a man of business?"

"I was so once, I believe. But I do confess to you, Mary, that when I found Mr. Peterson not only willing to listen to my application, but, as it almost seemed to me, anxious to engage my services, I thought so much of you, and of the joy I should bring home with me, that I had enough to do to keep my happiness from bursting forth in some outlandish expression that would have betrayed my insanity, and so lost me the situation."

"And Mr. Peterson remembered you, did he?"

"Yes, and let me tell you, I owe his remembrance entirely to one of those admirable schemes of mine at which you have more than once had the audacity to laugh. I shall not indulge you by explaining which. Suffice it to observe, there are people who can appreciate merit of this kind, though Miss Maitland may fail to do so."

"I bow to Mr. Peterson, and certainly, in the present instance, with something more than ordinary respect. Oh! Robert, let us never despair again."

"No, Mary, I think I have been taught, this day, a lesson that will last me for life."

"A lesson all the more impressive, as it seems to me, that the good we were despairing of did not occur just at one critical moment, but was actually preparing for us, and even awaiting your acceptance, at the time when we were the most desponding. It is easy, however, to talk of these things, and easy even to feel them, just when some unexpected good has fallen into our own hands. The time to remember them, and to realise their value, is when the clouds again look dark above us, and when the prospect before us again closes in without any visible sign of escape from impending calamity."

"You can do much for me in this respect, Mary. See, for instance, what you have done already."

"I believe we can do much for each other. I, you know, despond sometimes, as well as you. But you spoke of some continental business, I think. Will you have to go abroad Robert?"

"In all probability I shall."

"At all events, you will leave this house; indeed you will leave us altogether."

"Not altogether, Mary. You know that well enough. Nay, you must not look so sad about my going."

"I am not sad, no, not in the least; only I always said you would spoil me, Robert. I shall never know what to do without you."

"Oh, I will be so stingy and saving, Mary. I shall lay by an endless amount of money, and then—"

"Out of the imaginary salary?"

"I feel perfectly safe about that, although I must allow that it would have looked a little more like business, if I made the salary a more important item of calculation. But I will write, perhaps to-morrow, requesting to be better informed on a few other points besides the salary, and then we shall have all in black and white. That will be doing business, Mary, even to your heart's content, I should think."

"And now, let us go and tell my mother this good news. She needs something to cheer her, for she has had no faith in your success."

"One word before you go, Mary. You must promise me, whatever Mrs. Maitland may think or say, that you will keep these rooms for me?"

"And you abroad?"

"Yes; the rooms must be mine."

"I thought you were going to economise."

"So I will; but I will not give up these rooms. I shall want them more than ever when I return. I shall have more property to stow away when I quit my den in the city, and that long attic will exactly suit my purpose."

"Ah, yes, the attic, certainly. You shall have that, and welcome."

"Mary, you don't quite understand me. There must be no other occupant of these rooms but myself. Promise me that?"

"I do promise it most willingly, if you will agree to keep the rooms without our receiving payment for them."

"Impossible! You could not even wish me to do so?"

"Well, as you like. I am sure it would be miserable enough to me to see them occupied by any other person."

"But you must make it all clear to your mother. Mrs. Maitland must understand that I retain the rooms for my own use."

"It shall be as you wish; only I think you should pay half the expense, instead of the whole."

"A very mean conscience you must think I possess, Mary, if you suppose that would satisfy me as a matter of justice towards your mother—to say nothing of yourself."

"As you like, then. I will make all right with my mother. A very pleasant lodger most people would think they had, in a gentleman who would insist upon paying in full, though likely to be always absent. I only wish we may not find it so, and that you will give us more trouble than we have any reason at present to anticipate."

"Oh! there will be trouble enough, never fear. You will have the care of all my papers, and all my keys; and Jane will have her endless dustings, and scourgings to perform—operations which she will now be able to carry on with great enjoyment to herself. And then you will have to get up a grand demonstration of welcome whenever I do return, for I can tell you, Mary, it will be no ordinary one that will satisfy me."

"Yes; and, perhaps, on these great occasions I may be able to obtain from my employers the liberal grant of a half-holiday."

"Mary, you freeze my blood when you talk of employers, and half-holidays—you, of all women—you, my noble Mary, to have to speak like a common drudge. Oh, Mary! I should like to make you a queen over half the world."

"Thank you, Robert; but at present I have certain exercises in grammar to correct, so we will defer my coronation, if you please, until my pupils have learned to parse. In the meantime, my mother will be wondering what dreadful thing has happened, that we should have to consult about it so long together. Let us go and tell her the good news."



CHAPTER XXIV.

Sleeps she? Can this indeed be death?
Are all her earthly sufferings o'er,
That well and patiently she bore,
But sank at last beneath?

ALL happily constituted families have one or more amongst their number who is naturally a care-taker; and very doubtful, indeed, are the comforts of that household where this valuable individual is not to be found. It is a great mistake to suppose that an excess of affection makes a care-taker. So far from this being the case, the care-taker often displays the smallest amount of demonstrative affection of the whole family, while some who are the most lavish of their caresses and endearments, and who express themselves in the warmest terms when they speak of their emotions of tenderness and love, take no care whatever of the objects of such affection. Of these two extremes may it ever be our lot to be associated with the care-taker!

Catherine Clifton possessed the best parts of both characters, for she was eminently a care-taker, and yet, from the warmth of natural impulse, she usually found easy and spontaneous expression for about as large an amount of affection as

any human heart could feel. Indeed it would be difficult to fill the place of a care-taker without a rich endowment of the capability of loving, although it may not always be able to make itself manifest to general observation; and happy it is for those who feel the want of this faculty of expression, where they can pour forth their kindly feelings through the more substantial medium of acts of welcome service, as well as in general solicitude about the welfare of others.

It seemed as if Catherine was likely to find sufficient exercise for her natural capabilities, without being a governess. Mrs. Clifton consoled herself with thinking that even had her daughter yielded to this, her own long-cherished project, there would have been neither time nor opportunity for carrying it out. She never once considered that Catherine was just falling into her own appropriate place in the world, at the same time that she was answering the call of Nature and of Providence. It was a pity, Mrs. Clifton thought, but it could not be helped; circumstances really did not admit of a choice as to what she would do. One call of absolute duty came so quickly

upon another, that if Catherine had ever undertaken the task of a governess, she would have had to be recalled, and placed in attendance upon her aunt or her friend.

Catherine had not naturally any great amount of presence of mind. As a child she had been the first to cry out, when pain or danger were to be apprehended. But the constant companionship of illness, and the near approach of death, can do great things in the way of discipline, and Catherine had learned both to conquer her own fears, and to restrain her own emotions, while ministering to the wishes and the comfort of her friend. On the calm of that still chamber she had learned, how necessary it is to maintain an even temper, and collected manner, while ministering to the wants of those whose sole remaining wish on earth seems to be for that peace which is a foretaste of heaven; and thus she had become schooled, as it were, for the more painful duties which she was called to fulfil on behalf of her aunt.

No human being ever knew what poor Catherine passed through on this occasion. She had not gone to her aunt to shudder and complain, but to help, and to cheer; and her part was acted out with a firmness that would have astonished her own mind had she found a moment for thinking of herself. Happily there was too much to be done to admit of any consideration about either pain or difficulty, and a large amount of this fell to Catherine's share to direct and manage, if not exactly to execute.

But we will not dwell upon those scenes, which ever afterwards, on looking back, seemed to have accumulated in a few short days the experience of a whole life. The invalid was calm, patient, and resigned in an eminent degree; but like many other uncomplaining sufferers, she had allowed her malady to prey too long upon a constitution naturally delicate. Thus there was considerable doubt on the part of some of her medical advisers, whether a nature so fragile could sustain the operation of those means which it seemed necessary to apply. No other chance of life, however, remained, and the painful experiment was tried.

For some time everything was hoped from the wonderful calmness and self-

possession of the patient; but the case was found to be even more severe than had been anticipated, and there were looks and expressions interchanged amongst the doctors, which Catherine, with her usual quickness, interpreted into rapidly increasing apprehensions for the life of their patient. Again and again she urged that all should be done which human skill could devise or accomplish. All was done, and still the patient sunk lower and lower each day, without any sign of ability to rally.

Catherine saw what the end must be, though she did not know how near; but though she lost all hope that the precious life of her aunt could be prolonged beyond a very limited period, she never lost her self-command, nor relaxed in heart or hand, nor flinched from the most arduous and distressing duties. No look or word escaped her by which a bystander could have discovered that they were distressing. Her very countenance, though so earnest in its deep solitude, had an expression of cheerfulness about it, arising partly from the habit which she always had of extracting interest, and even amusement, from the most common and insignificant things. Thus, the very draught which she offered sometimes to the parched lips of fever was rendered welcome by the looks and expressions with which it was accompanied; and many a smile was made to play around those lips by this kind and winning manner, even while her own heart was sad enough, and her own spirit almost crushed beneath its load of pressing anxieties.

The last night which Catherine ever spent in rational communion with this beloved and venerated relative was one of inexpressible tenderness and solemnity. It seemed as if the patient sufferer lived again that night through many of the most affecting scenes of her past experience. Her memory, too, was full of exquisite impressions, and images of faithful and long-cherished affection. Beloved names were then recalled, and solemn charges given, to be delivered when the lips which spoke them should be closed for ever in the silent grave. Seymour Clifton was especially remembered then; and Catherine had to hide her face behind the curtains of the bed, because she could not, with all her efforts, staunch the gush-

ing tears which burst forth at the mention of this beloved brother. Ah! how little did either of them know where this precious wanderer from the household circle was at that time laid, nor under what circumstances he was sorely needing such consolation as their affection could so plentifully afford. But God knows all—the need of the poor fainting heart, wherever it may beat; and it is his prerogative to supply that need through such channels as his wisdom alone is capable of selecting as the best.

"I often think of poor Seymour," said the sufferer in her faint low voice—"because, in the weak points of his character, I have always had a fellow feeling. He has talents which I never possessed; but then on the other hand, his kind of weakness is perhaps a greater disadvantage to a man, than to a woman."

"Experience," said Catherine, "will do much for him in this respect."

"Oh! yes," replied her aunt; "experience on earth, and a blessed Saviour in heaven. It is the suffering—the suffering I think of, for one so tenderly constituted. I know what suffering is, dear Catherine."

"Indeed you do," replied her niece, thinking she was alluding to her recent trial. But the patient shook her head.

"It is not *that*," she said—"that will soon be over now; but my whole life—my *inner* life, at least, was one of suffering. I had the same weakness as that dear boy—I was perpetually calling inclination duty."

"You, my dear aunt?"

"Yes, even I."

"How you must have schooled yourself, then, to arrive at your present state!"

"Say, rather, how I must have been schooled by One who was kinder to me than I was to myself. Catherine, shall I tell you what I attempted to do while I was still but a girl in years, and a *child* in experience?"

"Yes, tell me anything—everything about yourself."

"Well, my dear, I had the presumption to think I could convert a bad man."

"And you did not succeed?"

"Succeed? How was it likely. I was not even converted myself."

"And what was the consequence?"

"Mortification, misery, and repentance, only to end with this present life.

Instead of drawing him out of the pit, I was myself drawn in so far as to call evil good, for his sake. Then followed a long train of entanglements, perversions, and wasted feelings, all which might have been avoided had I acted with firmness of principle at first. But I am not regretting what has passed, now. Oh! no. Far sifter would it be for me, and far more congenial to my present feelings, to bless God, who out of all this folly and perverseness—and I may say, out of all this fiery trial, brought me as a chastened child to bow before him; and with my whole heart and soul, to acknowledge that he doeth all things well. What does it matter what we suffer here, if only the great work is done at last? Still, Catherine, there are long, weary ways, that some of us persist in taking, when we might go directly and at once to the foot of the cross; and this it is which makes me now think so much of that dear brother of yours, because he is giving himself so much pain and trouble, when his path might be all peace, and joy."

"We do not know, dear aunt."

"No, child; we do not know. God is all powerful, as well as full of mercy, and of goodness. But this is too much for me. I fain would sleep. Let me be still. Bless God, and let me sleep."

The voice of the patient sufferer had grown more feeble as she was speaking, so as scarcely to be articulate towards the last; and while she repeated "Bless God, and praise his holy name for ever more," her eyes closed softly, and a smile illuminated her features, as if the feeling of thanksgiving and praise was still there, though the lips might never utter that language again to any human ear.

Catherine drew nearer to the couch, and there she kept her silent watch, scarcely sensible that the breathing of her aunt had become gradually interrupted, so as that longer intervals occurred between each faint sigh. At last the dim light of morning broke; and Catherine, aroused from her deep watching, in which, with that pale motionless figure before her, she had been visiting in thought the world of spiritual life—aroused, at last, to a sense of present things, she saw that death was slowly stealing over those familiar features, and that, in all probability,

there would be no more return to consciousness or life.

All, however, remained so peaceful, so calm, so holy, that Catherine felt reluctant to call in other spectators of that solemn scene. She had never been present at the hour of death before; and her imagination had conjured up frightful pictures of the last mortal struggle. But here was the gentle sleep of the poor tortured body; every pain now quieted, all restlessness allayed, and even weariness converted into rest; while the pale countenance still wore an expression, as if the happy soul only lingered on to take a fond farewell before departing on its journey heavenward.

"Can this be death?" said Catherine to herself; and while a strange awe yet hung about her spirit, her feet seemed rivetted to the spot by a fascination still more strange. She could not leave that solemn spectacle, even to summon any of the household to come and stand beside her, in the gloom of that dimly lighted chamber. But it was not gloomy to her. No, it seemed rather as if the floor was trod by angels' feet, and as if sweet airs from heaven whispered around her messages of peace and love.

At last a human foot approached. It was one of the accustomed attendants. Catherine lifted her finger to indicate that no sound, and no disturbance must be made. The woman took her place beside the foot of the bed, and both gazed on without the utterance of a word. In this manner they watched until the breathing had entirely ceased. Long after that, Catherine persuaded herself there was still some movement of the lips, or hands, or breast; and thus she lingered, and thus she watched, until the morning sun shone full into the room. Then, gradually, she became convinced that all was indeed over; and that the kind heart, which had so recently animated that gentle form, would never beat again in sympathy with human joy or woe.

The loss of so judicious and valuable a friend, was deeply felt by all the Clifton family. Perhaps, even Catherine did not fully know the value of her aunt, until she turned away from the silent room in which the last offices of affection had been so faithfully performed. It had been

a great satisfaction to Catherine during the trial which preceded the death of her aunt, to hold frequent intercourse with her brother Robert; and he was now her great support, her adviser and comforter, in the duties which yet remained to be discharged.

Mary Maitland, too, with whom Catherine had no previous acquaintance, came now in the hour of desolation, to offer that sisterly kindness and sympathy, of which Catherine was so much in need. From the fact of Mary having no sister of her own, she was more than usually attracted by Catherine's frankness, and willingness to accept her somewhat timidly offered services. Besides this, there was a certain sincerity and directness of character in both, which opened the way to mutual good understanding; and Robert had the satisfaction of seeing an intimacy commenced between them, which was, perhaps, all the deeper and more enduring, from the circumstances under which it was first formed.

About to lose one friend so dearly loved, Catherine was all the more disposed to adopt into her heart one who was to be, at some future time, united by a closer tie; but while she felt more than ever that want which friendship alone could supply, she almost feared to love any one too much, lest death should again deprive her of their affection. Such, indeed, is the natural consequence of being called to resign, in quick succession, one friend after another. It is not under recent bereavement, but in after years, that we are able to say,

"Tis better to have loved, and lost,
Than never to have loved at all."

All the time of Catherine's attendance upon her aunt, she had received almost daily intelligence of the friend whom she had so reluctantly consigned to the care of other hands; not, however, quite so reluctantly as would have been the case, had Henry Linden been still pursuing his wanderings through distant lands.

Henry was now her constant correspondent on behalf of his sister, who, from his account, appeared to be sinking so gradually, and so gently, that scarcely was there any change observable by those who watched her from day to day. The spring

was coming, Henry often said; and with his accustomed buoyancy of spirits, he evidently calculated somewhat upon that for the restoration of his sister, to at least a comparative degree of health. Every one else, with the exception of her father, saw plainly that she was dying. But Henry would not allow any one to express this conviction in his presence. He was one of those persons who can persuade themselves that a painful idea can be divested of its reality, by never being allowed to find utterance in words. Besides which, he knew nothing of the cause which had given so great a shock to his sister's constitution; and, judging by the perfect calm which now overspread her countenance, and which occasionally imparted something even like cheerfulness to her voice, and her smile, he thought there was hope yet, that death might not be near; for cheerfulness to him was but another expression for that enjoyment of the present world, which he naturally associated with the idea of remaining long a participator in its pleasures.

"You see Grace has everything in her favour," Henry often repeated, while he and his father took their almost silent meals together; "she has had everything her own way, has never been crossed nor thwarted, nor known what trouble was. I really cannot see, even yet, why she should not be herself again, especially when the fine weather comes."

But the fine weather would not come so soon as Henry wished. Indeed it was, that year, later than usual in coming; cold north-easterly winds seemed to have taken possession of the world, and they blew so incessantly, that when Henry repeated his remark that Grace had everything in her favour, the old man shook his head unbelievably, for he knew well how other flowers had dropped off from his household wreath, just when nature was beginning to smile after a cold and tardy spring. He knew also the symptoms which his son was not able to detect, and while he tried to think as Henry did, and when he could not really think so, tried to look as if he did, his heart sunk within him all the more despondingly for having been buoyed up, though it might have been only for a moment, by a hope so utterly groundless and delusive.

Catherine Clifton was glad to lay hold of these encouraging accounts from Henry as a plea for not returning to her charge; for notwithstanding all the sad experience which she had lately passed through, and which from its momentous interest made the intervening time since she and Henry parted seem like years instead of months; notwithstanding too, all that she knew of his character, which led her to believe that he had the happy power of forgetting, with greater facility than most men, what he did not wish to remember; she still shrunk from placing herself again in any kind of familiar intercourse with one whose presence could not fail to bring back to her mind, at least, many painful and humiliating associations.

Thus Catherine's return was delayed from day to day; and as there had been no message conveyed from her friend that her presence was really desired, she found sufficient employment, under the direction of her brother, in arranging the household property, and all other charges which her aunt had left behind, with regard to her servants, and the many poor families, who had been wholly, or in part, dependant on her bounty.

Robert Clifton was the sole executor, and it was with no small satisfaction he found that his aunt had bequeathed the largest amount of the property which she left behind, to her two nieces, Helen and Catherine Clifton. It is true that her means had never been very abundant, and that her charities were such as to reduce her personal expenses to what many would have called poor for her station in life. Even now the amount of small legacies was such, that Robert feared at one time, his sisters' share would be but nominal. On further investigation, however, it proved that a rigid economy in all matters of a personal nature, had enabled Miss Clifton to expend annually a very liberal sum in supplying the necessities of the poor, and yet to keep the principal amount of her property untouched; so that after all should be settled, there would remain a little independence for his sisters, if ever they should choose to unite their means, and to live together in an humble and unpretending manner. This was all which

his anxious and affectionate heart had ever asked for them. It took a mighty load from that heart, to know that this was now secured. They might pursue their way for the present, according to any plan that seemed best to them; but if illness or any other calamity should deprive them of the power of exertion, there would now be no privation, and no painful dependance to apprehend on their account.

As Robert had expected, both sisters chose simultaneously, and without a moment's hesitation, that the interest of their little property should be entirely appropriated by their parents. Helen had no wish but to pursue the path of independence which she had chosen for herself; and as for Catherine, she declared that she had no use for money, beyond the supply of her own personal wants, which she had succeeded in reducing to the smallest possible amount; so small, indeed, that Robert expressed some concern about the respectability of her appearance; but Catherine argued, that as her place in the world seemed to be exclusively that of a nurse, it would be absurd as well as inconvenient for her to adopt any kind of costume unfitted for her station. One thing only Robert stipulated for, and adhered to with pertinacity—it was, that Catherine should officiate as one of the bridesmaids at his wedding; and that, on that signal occasion, she should not disgrace her family. Catherine freely gave her promise to this effect, and in the meantime she was permitted to go on in her own humble way.

Instead of bridal robes, however, Catherine seemed likely to have much more to do at present with the habiliments of mourning. She could smile, it is true, and that not unfrequently, for her nature was constitutionally buoyant and hopeful; but much had passed lately in her individual experience which had made her look upon life, as well as death, more seriously than ever in her life before. Indeed, the presence of death does little for us, when it only invests with awe and terror the dark portals of the grave—when it only brings the last journey before us invested with this stern reality, that we must all set out on that journey, perhaps, at some unexpected summons, and that

we must all undertake that journey alone. Much is said on this subject to terrify and alarm; but if the presence of death leads us only to think of meeting the call of the last messenger, a great portion of the message conveyed is lost upon those who remain; because it reaches not directly the great question of life, and of that present life with which they have to do. That both applications of the message are necessary, is clear to every candid mind; but when we think of ourselves, and of our own danger or safety, we think most of death—when we think of God and his glory, of his purpose in placing us here, and of all that he has devised and brought into operation for our temporal happiness, and our eternal salvation, we think most of living, and living so as to walk daily in the steps of the Saviour.

It was with this view of life, that Catherine Clifton returned to her duties; and when once the effects of long watching and constant anxiety had been thrown off from her physical system, she returned cheerfully as ever, and was in all things herself again; except that in her inner life there was a stronger and deeper earnestness so to pursue her work on earth, that she might at last resign her life with the calmness and the perfect peace which she had recently witnessed.

Catherine wondered sometimes that Grace Linden, who had been once so entirely dependent upon her services, should express no wish for her return; and welcome as was this sudden release from duty under present circumstances, she was entirely at a loss how to account for it. She did not know that in the last stages of that fatal disease, there is often such a total prostration of strength as to leave scarcely the power to wish: neither did she know, that in the present case there had been such frequent recourse to the administering of sedatives, that the poor patient scarcely knew from day to day who was in attendance in her room; or, if at one moment she entertained the purpose of requesting that Catherine might be sent for, she lost all consciousness the next, and so forgot alike the wish and the expression of her desire to have it gratified.

In this manner life ebbed out,—with her, as it does with thousands, leaving

towards the last scarcely a consciousness either of living or dying. If, in all instances where this is the case, this parting languor and destitution of all thought, was only preceded by the brightness which characterized the first stages of Grace Linden's illness; and if, in that season of brightness, the great work which has to be transacted between the soul and its Maker has only been as humbly, as sincerely, and as prayerfully carried on, there would be little to regret in those deepening shadows which obscure the natural day. But where the case is different, how pitiful—how more than pitiful is that false calm—that sleep from which there is no waking—that death in life which steepens the senses in oblivion, at the very time when every power and every energy is wanted in its utmost force, to test and to feel the reality of things eternal!

It was this false calm which gave the impression to Henry Linden that his sister was not suffering, and that, in the absence of suffering, she must be doing well. Little, indeed, did he know of illness in its peculiar symptoms—still less of those which indicate the near approach of final dissolution. Those who attended in the sick-room, and whose knowledge went far beyond his own, made it no part of their business to communicate the unwelcome intelligence that his sister was dying. Once or twice they had expressed their dissent from his encouraging prognostications; but the impatient manner in which these opinions had been received was a sufficient reason with them for abstaining from all further expression of what they knew to be the truth.

Prompted by her own feelings, Catherine Clifton had decided upon returning home, in order to be nearer to her friend, if not actually on the spot, when she received a letter from her mother, in which her return was urged with great earnestness. Mrs. Clifton having learned from one of the servants of the house, that the encouraging accounts she was in the habit of receiving from Henry, were the result of a delusion in which he persisted contrary to all reason.

Catherine lost no time in complying with this request, and she set out immediately. The day on which she left London was almost the first of a late spring,

which set in with such balmy airs, and such sweet promise of reviving nature, that it seemed doubly painful to think of the last expiring light of a young and beautiful life, under such circumstances. Yet so it was. The truth stood out in stern reality; and Catherine knew that she must prepare to behold one of the most touching pictures which the imagination is capable of conceiving—beauty exchanged for ashes—youth enrobed in the stern habiliments of decay, and all this, too, when the banks were gay with flowers, and the woods were filled with the melody of joy.

All things, as Catherine journeyed onward, seemed to wear the same aspect of rejoicing and exultation. All things seemed to be tending towards the one great object of all the multitudes of earth,—provision for long life, and its enjoyment. The market gardens full of fresh green produce, and the laden carts which thronged the outskirts of the city; the flocks and herds which, farther on, amidst more rural scenery speckled the smooth downs, or browsed in the deeper meadows, all the busy occupations of husbandry now carried on with unwearied alacrity, owing to the lateness of the season; and then, as the day advanced, light rolling carriages, each with its gay freightage of beauty and of happiness; all these were sights so much in accordance with Catherine's natural temperament, but now with the scenes she was expecting to witness, so dissonant and jarring, that she found herself shrinking into the remotest corner of the carriage, and even hiding her face beneath a deep veil, in order that she might not see the sunshine and the glitter of the green earth and cloudless sky, nor the life and the happy merriment of all animated nature.

All sense of what surrounded her, however, was lost to Catherine's feelings before she reached her home. One idea alone took possession of her mind,—Was her friend still living, and would she be able to exchange with her so much as a word of parting kindness?

It so happened that the carriage in which Catherine travelled, passed directly within view of the front of Mr. Linden's house, though at a considerable distance. Catherine fancied that even the outward aspect of their dwelling would indicate

something of the state of the family within, and, with the utmost stretch of attention, she strained her eyes in that direction long before the house itself was in view. At last she recognised the well-remembered fields, for there was a long plantation stretching from the grounds, a brook, a stile, a winding path which had been familiarly trod in happy days, that now seemed—oh, so long ago!

A bright afternoon sun was shining full upon the hill side on which stood Mr. Linden's house. Catherine had seen the windows, on such an afternoon, flash out against the light, as if they were illuminated. She strained her eyes; a long line of road-side trees shut out the view; now she could see even the bowery shrubs of the garden, and now the house with its full front, broad and clear in the golden sunshine.

Catherine had been for a good while stretching her head quite out of the window of the carriage. She now sunk down, and covered her face with her hands. It was a public conveyance; there were other passengers, and Catherine felt that strangers had no business to meddle with her grief; so she spoke not, nor gave any sign of feeling, beyond the close pressure of her handkerchief upon her eyes and forehead. One of the passengers, more observant than the rest, got up and looked out of the window from whence Catherine had looked, in order to see what she had seen; but there was nothing for the common eye to behold; nothing but green fields, meadows sprinkled with daisies and buttercups, and a gentleman's pretty residence on the opposite hill side. There was nobody, that this passenger could see, walking in the garden or the grounds, nor waving a kerchief from the windows. Indeed the whole house looked still as death, and only one peculiarity was made visible by the bright sunshine,—all the windows were white,—perhaps there were blinds let down,—perhaps somebody was dead.

The passenger sat down again, and fixing a long gaze upon Catherine, seemed not to be observant of any other object, until the rattling of the vehicle over the firmer pavement of the streets, startled all the travellers into the agreeable necessity

of bethinking themselves of their stray parcels, and carpet-bags.

Catherine was met at the door of the coach by a servant whose services she directed without the exchange of a single unnecessary word; and she left the scene of bustle even before this servant had secured all her property, walking away by herself at a rapid pace, with the eyes of the wondering passenger still fixed upon her.

Catherine found, on reaching home, that all was as she had apprehended. The gentle spirit of her friend had passed away so peacefully that those who watched could scarcely tell the moment when the last faint sigh was breathed. No one was surprised, except the brother, to find that her sweet life had ebbed away. But to him the shock appeared, for a while, to be unsupportable. With his usual impetuosity of emotion, he refused at first to be comforted; and when the remains of his beautiful sister had been solemnly consigned to their last earthly resting place, he declared himself incapable of enduring his life in a house which death had stripped of every attraction; and thus, setting out again upon a distant journey, he soon succeeded in forgetting, with his accustomed facility, all which it was either painful or uncongenial to his feelings to remember.

For a short time Catherine Clifton now had rest from arduous duties. Rest was urgently required, for her feelings had so long been kept on the utmost stretch of endurance, that her health had become enfeebled to an extent beyond what she was herself aware of; and she only became fully sensible of her weakness when all cause for extraordinary exertion had ceased. But rest on earth seemed not very likely to be Catherine's lot; for scarcely had more than one month of comparative quiet enabled her to regain some portion of her accustomed vigour and elasticity, when a letter from her sister Helen arrived, imploring her, if possible, to fly to her assistance. She was left, she said, with a whole family of children upon her hands; and symptoms of a dangerous malady were appearing amongst them. What could Catherine do but go?



CHAPTER XXV.

He preached God's holy word,
 He told them of a Saviour crucified;
 Attentively they heard
 How Christ for them, and all mankind, had died

SLOWLY dawned the morning of dim consciousness upon one, who, far removed from the solemn transactions we have been describing, awoke to a sense of reviving life in a strange land, and surrounded by those who felt no interest in watching over him.

Seymour Clifton had been nursed as the other patients in the hospital were. No distinction was made in his case, no extra care or tenderness bestowed upon him. But he had happily been so long insensible to the painful or humiliating circumstances of his situation, that the cold strange eyes which he first saw looking in his face neither startled nor repelled him; for he seemed not to have feeling enough left to care either for sympathy or neglect.

The first real fact which brought Seymour to a sense of his condition was a demand for money, in order to procure some indulgence which he had expressed a wish for, but which the rules of the institution did not supply. Money was

a new, but a perfectly intelligible want. He ought to have had money with him, but neither that, nor anything else which he had owned as property, was he able to account for. He asked for his portmanteau—for the trunks and chests which must have been left with him from the ship. For a long time they could not be found. At last it was ascertained that they had been opened, fumigated, and emptied of their contents. These, to a certain extent, had been destroyed, as a means of ensuring safety from infection. Papers, letters, precious records of the past—all had shared the same fate: scarcely anything was left. Now Seymour bethought himself that he had once possessed letters of introduction. Who had taken possession of these, or were they also lost? These inquiries were made, and answered, at first without any very painful emotion, for such was the utter incapacity of mind and body under which he laboured, that nothing alarmed him—not even the terrible destitution and helplessness of his present situation. Some clearer thoughts haunted him, however, about a person who had visited him in his illness, but whose figure he did not recog-

nise amongst any of his present attendants.

"Perhaps it was only a figure in a dream," Seymour said to himself, for he had had so many dreams, and some of them so vivid, that he could not distinguish betwixt his sleeping and his waking impressions. It seemed to have been a pleasant dream which presented the image of this person, for whenever he recalled it, there sounded in his ear the voice of kindness, otherwise so long lost as almost to be forgotten.

But it was not always that Seymour was destined to enjoy the comparative peace of this insensibility. Day by day his faculties awakened slowly into life; and then came that sense of weakness, languor, helplessness, and utter destitution, which is perhaps the most trying stage of illness, and certainly not the less trying because it seizes upon the patient, bodily and mentally, at the time when hope is promising restoration to health and comfort. It came to Seymour Clifton, as he was now circumstanced, with unspeakable depression, and infinite disgust. It came, too, with long fits of bitter weeping, for which he was chidden like a child. Was there no one to whom he could appeal?—no one of whom he might ask a word of counsel or of kindness? Better—a thousand times better—he thought would have been that death from which he had so narrowly escaped, than to linger out his life on such terms. Where was that image which had brought soothing to his beating head, and restless mind? He asked his attendants, but the answer he perpetually received was that he must lie down and be quiet—that the doctors had ordered it, and he must obey.

With the general re-awakening of his faculties, memory came back to Seymour's mind before it was strong enough to bear, with any degree of composure, the burden of tender recollections which memory brought. The season of the year, the general circumstances of his home, the friends, the intimate associations of his past life, all came vividly before him. It is needless to say how much he thought of Grace Linden; but he saw her still beautiful and happy, sometimes adorned with the freshness of health, radiant in glowing spirits, and at peace with herself and with

all the world. Then he beheld her less distinctly, veiled, as it were, or shrouded behind the deep shadow of a cloud; and then, as the feeble convalescent often will, he took to a long series of frightful dreams, in which this lovely and beloved form was always associated with some strange terror or calamity, for the most part made up of images so grotesque that no after description of them could have conveyed the least idea of the solemn awe, and the profound horror, which they left upon the awakened senses. Grave-yards, coffins, death-bed struggles, made up chiefly the substance of these nightly visions. Ah! little did the dreamer think how far these objects of natural repulsion were now left behind in the track of upward glory which that gentle spirit was pursuing. Little indeed did the fond but frightened dreamer think that she, whose love he could not associate with such images without agony and horror, might be at that very moment looking down with pity upon him from out her father's mansion, where, with harp and voice attuned to heavenly harmony, she sat and smiled beside the river of eternal gladness, happy in the fellowship of glorified and rejoicing spirits, and at peace for evermore.

Strange to say, Seymour Clifton thought little now of things external. Perhaps he had not the power to think. However that might be, he seemed to grovel down into a state of unusual forgetfulness, for him, of all which could so well have borne him above the trials and humiliations of his present situation. Hence his deep depression—his utter wretchedness. The spiritual vitality—the religious fervour of which, at previous stages of his life, he had appeared so eminently capable, seemed now to have deserted him, leaving him in the hour of need all the more painfully destitute, because of the vivid recollections which this former state of feeling had impressed upon his mind. His condition now seemed to be altogether lost and low. He scarcely even wished it to be different. What was to be done? Was Seymour Clifton, with all his high capabilities, to pass in this way out of life, and so to perish?

It happened one day, as Seymour was lying in this half-senseless state, looking listlessly about him, that a figure

entered the long chamber, which he fancied he must have seen before. It could not exactly be described as that of a gentleman, in the usual acceptation of the word; but his office was evidently that of a minister of religion, for he carried a well-worn Bible in his hand, out of which he soon began to read short passages to some of the patients, who evidently recognized him as a friend, and evinced by their looks and manners the greatest satisfaction in his presence.

This then was the person who had spoken kindly to Seymour at a time when he was insensible to almost everything else; and this voice, which he now recognised in the low murmuring sound of prayer, was the same which had made for itself so ready a passage to his heart, awakening such feelings there as fever and delirium were not powerful enough wholly to obliterate.

Oh! that he could come to me! thought Seymour, as he watched this venerable figure moving slowly from one part of the room to another, as if it came with a blessed mission to each of the many sufferers there. At last it was Seymour's turn to be addressed, and as he listened for the first time for so many months to the language of sympathy, and of holy communion with God through the medium of prayer, life—a new life—clearer and brighter than he had ever experienced before, seemed to dawn upon him, even in that imperfect state of his perceptions, awakening a thrilling but fitful kind of hope that told of higher and more ennobling purposes for which his nature was calculated, and in the pursuit of which he yet might win a glorious race.

The kind visitant of the sick, who had so often watched beside Seymour in his unconscious moments, had not been regardless of his temporal interests, but had rescued his papers, and some fragments of his property, from the destruction to which they would otherwise have been consigned. Amongst other things, he had recently discovered the letter of introduction, and had noted its address. The gentleman to whom it was directed was well-known to him, and he rejoiced in the opportunity thus afforded him of rendering, what he doubted not would be, the most essential service to the sufferer; if,

indeed, he should ever be likely to require the benefit of human aid again.

The letter, therefore, had been faithfully delivered, and many consultations had been held on the subject of Seymour's pitiable condition. Nothing, however, could be done while he remained in so critical a state, nor could his father's friend, who was a man of social habits, surrounded by a numerous family, risk the safety of his own household by admitting the invalid beneath his roof, while suffering from an illness so frightful in itself, and in its probable contagion. Thus a kind and judicious care was exercised over Seymour, though he knew it not; and at the very time when he felt most desolate—most helpless in himself, as well as most unlikely to be helped by others, there were friends in frequent consultation about his welfare, and welcomes were preparing for him of a nature calculated to encourage and support his sinking spirits.

But without following Seymour through the long stages of his slow convalescence, we will simply state one fact of momentous importance to him, and to all. On recovering some degree of health, his mind was at first so confused, that he could scarcely think collectedly on any subject; but so soon as he did begin to think to any purpose, a great truth dawned upon him. It was that his religion had hitherto been but a matter of sentiment and emotion. Of this he was first persuaded by the arguments of his newly-found friend, and subsequently by the convictions of his own heart. The necessary consequence was, that his religious life was yet to be begun. Hard task! when old associations are strong, and especially when the vigour both of mind and body is enfeebled by long and severe illness. Hard task! when the mind has been long accustomed to believe that religion is its most congenial element. But an element to live in is not a principle of action, nor a motive for effort; and these were precisely what was wanting in Seymour's religion. These must be found then, and not only found but embraced, and held by, or the frail bark must be for ever tossed upon a sea of uncertainty, without any surety for its ultimate safety.

Seymour now saw all this, and he felt the truth more deeply than he would perhaps have been willing to acknowledge to any other friend than the self-devoted stranger, who would not forsake him, even in moments of exhaustion, and sometimes of petulance, when the invalid, stung to irritation by the convictions of his own conscience, felt disposed to retort upon his faithful guardian the pain which he could not escape, except by a new and entire surrender of his heart to the will of God. Seymour had worshipped before, but he had never really *submitted*. He was ready to worship now. Indeed, it was habitual with him to live in a state of adoration of the Divine nature, as displayed in all things holy, beautiful, and pure. But when the question was one of duty—one of subjugation of self-will to God's will—of inclination to right, then Seymour knew, or might have known, that he was still an unconverted man; and that for all the purposes of life, and all the hopes of death, he had still his great work to begin.

But we must not linger here, at this stage of Seymour's experience. Suffice it, that the work was gradual, sometimes reluctantly engaged in, sometimes neglected for a season, and then taken up with ardour for awhile; but still the work went on, and Seymour Clifton became a greatly altered man. One thing was in his favour—he was situated where few temptations ever assailed him. The family to whom his father's letter had introduced him were sincere friends, but none of them exactly after Seymour's taste in the phases of character which they displayed. Mr. Elliot, the head of the family, was a man of business; but, having been long impressed with serious thoughts respecting the condition of the people around him, he had himself employed the services of the good missionary who had visited the hospital at the time of Seymour's illness in exploring the haunts of vice and disorder, in which deeds of lawless violence were sometimes transacted, which could scarcely be met with except in a condition of society so mixed, and so made up of some of the worst elements of civilized life.

Mr. Elliot felt no call to this kind of duty himself; but he was naturally a kind-

hearted man, and he saw the urgent need there was for some kind of instruction being extended to these neglected people; and he was well able, not only to protect by his influence, but to remunerate by his ample means, any one, who, more devoted than himself, would go at the risk of life, and at the sacrifice of every comfort, amongst those wandering people, and endeavour to win them from their debased and miserable habits, inspiring in their minds the only motive that has ever been found powerful enough to convert the cruel barbarian into a humane and reasonable man.

Seymour Clifton accompanied the aged missionary in some of his long and perilous journeys. He watched the performance of those labours of love which were not by any means confined to the welfare of the immortal soul through an endless eternity, but took faithfully and diligently into account, the welfare of the body for the present life as well. Seymour had seen this old man strain his exhausted energies in teaching many of the laborious arts of civilized life. He had heard him tell of ways and means by which comfort might be increased, and property economised; and he found him never irritated by the neglect of his instructions, yet even more than rewarded, when, in any instance, however trifling, he found that his recommendations had been attended to, and even imperfectly carried out.

Here was a lesson to be learned by one, who, like Seymour, had been always a little too fastidious in his intercourse with others, and at times a little requiring when they could not see with his eyes, nor form their opinions according to his standard. Here, then, was a lesson to be learned. It is true the old man had not Seymour's tastes, nor Seymour's sensitive feelings, it might be; but he had temper enough to begin life with, and self-will so strong, that, as he said, nothing ever could subdue it but the will of his Heavenly Father: yet even this gave way to his benevolence; and, as he often repeated, his Saviour had borne so much more from the malice of his enemies, and the neglect of his friends, that what was he that he should complain?—what was he that he should refuse to tread the thorny path,

when a crown of thorns had been placed upon his Saviour's brow?

It was scarcely possible that Seymour should be much associated with this old, but faithful servant of his Lord, without perceiving that there is something soul-sustaining in a life of religious duty, imparting to the whole character a strength and a firmness beyond what he could ever hope to derive from any other source. This very strength was precisely what Seymour had so much wanted all his life. Was it possible for him—for one so constitutionally weak and sensitive, and consequently so easily turned aside—was it possible for him ever to attain this necessary strength? It was. Because it was possible, even for him, to recur continually, and in all his actions, to a motive so deep and powerful that it could raise him above every difficulty, guard him from every temptation, and support him under every trial.

In his early youth, Seymour Clifton had dreamed of devoting himself to a life such as that which he now contemplated. He had listened with deep interest to narratives of missionary enterprise, and thought he should like to be one of the labourers in that field, if it were only possible for him to reap the glory without risking too much of the dangers to be met with there; for notwithstanding all his natural shrinking and timidity, Seymour had a lurking desire to be a hero still. Now he saw what the life he had dreamed of really was. Now he saw what it was to be a hero in the cause of Christ, and for the sole benefit of his fellow-men; he saw how much it was like being despised by the world, shut out from its cherished enjoyments, and forgotten by the rest of mankind. Was Seymour prepared for this?

Whether prepared or not, the necessity of making his choice came upon him sooner than he had anticipated, and it took him so entirely by surprise, that he had no time to make calculations upon what he should like or not like. The old missionary died. An accident which occurred to him on one of the journeys in which Seymour was his companion, brought on the disease from which he had not sufficient power to rally; and with no attendant but Seymour, he breathed his last

in a solitary hut, situated in a remote part of the country to which they had wandered together. In fact, there had been tidings brought to the missionary of some grievous wrong done to the natives of the country, by a party of young Englishmen in that neighbourhood; and having heard of reprisals, and schemes of vengeance, he had set out immediately in the hope of calming their restless spirits, and bringing the irritated parties to terms of peace.

Seymour would willingly have remained behind on this occasion; but the idea of allowing his aged friend to depart on such a journey alone and unaided, was too much like the kind of selfishness which he abhorred in others, though sometimes not altogether free from it himself. He remembered too, the kind and faithful services he had received from this friend during the time of his illness in the hospital, and his better feelings finally overcame the reluctance which he naturally felt. So the two travellers prepared the few necessities which they were likely to require on such a journey, and with no other companion than a boy who had often accompanied them before, they set out together, expecting to be some weeks absent, and separated from all intercourse with Europeans, only as they might be met with in a form little better than savage, and much more to be feared, from the reckless acts of cruelty and destruction by which their course was so often marked.

Seymour had taken many shorter journeys with the missionary, and had found him an interesting and instructive companion. It is true his scientific knowledge was extremely limited; but he had been all his life a great observer of facts, and the general phenomena of Nature had not been spread before him in vain.

The travellers had reached the extreme point of their destination before the accident occurred, to which allusion has already been made, and which at first appeared so little important that they were preparing to pursue their onward way, when Seymour, looking earnestly at the countenance of the old man, perceived there certain symptoms of exhaustion and suffering, which immediately filled him with alarm. In a few hours these

symptoms had increased so rapidly, as to threaten an attack of delirium; and Seymour was alone with this aged man in the rude hut of a bushman, with no other attendant than the boy who had been their companion on the journey.

The fearful nature of his situation—nay, its absolute awfulness, came upon Seymour's mind, accompanied with some of the deepest emotions, which, in all probability, he had ever experienced. But there was little time for feeling now; much had to be done that could only be done by himself. One terrible, and never to be forgotten day, one agonizing night was passed by the side of the poor sufferer in this manner, with scarcely an interval of rational communication. Sometimes, for a moment, the old man spoke like himself, and then he never failed to entreat that Seymour would fill his place, and discharge his duties when he should be laid in the grave; imploring at the same time, with the utmost earnestness, that God would bless his labours, and make him strong and happy in the fulfilment of the mighty trust which would now devolve upon him alone.

Seymour answered not; and when the old man asked him if he would endeavour so to fill his place, as God would grant him ability, he could not answer, for he did not know. Each passing moment seemed so laden with momentous anxieties, that he could not even bring his mind to look into the future with any collected idea of what its requirements might be. The present was indeed more than sufficient for him to contemplate, for rapidly the shades of night were gathering around the aged pilgrim, to be dispelled by a morning of such brightness, that none, however intimate or dear, could have wished for his detention in the path which he trod so humbly, yet with so single and constant aim.

Before the opening of another day of mortal struggle, the messenger of rest had come,—and Seymour was alone. Strange, and almost incomprehensible to himself, appeared the situation in which he was left—the more strange, because he felt no fear. Shut out as he was from all human counsel or companionship, he had nothing for it now but to look up, and ask his heavenly Father to direct his steps, and

keep him both in peace and safety. Strange indeed! for a new courage—a strength such as he had never known before, seemed to fill the vacant chambers of his soul, making them echo with the glad tidings often heard, but never with the same emotions, that Christ had trod the roughest paths of earth before him, and was now watching his progress on that thorny way, and rejoicing in his advancement, though it might be only step by step, as with the feebleness of a poor helpless child.

The visit of the missionary, which had now terminated his earthly labours, was not the first he had made to that neighbourhood; and when it was known that the old man was sick, and dying, numbers of strange people had come flocking to the spot, some to make inquiries after their beloved teacher; others to obtain redress for wrongs, against which all complained; or if redress was not to be expected, there was evidently a general expectation of being heard respecting some recent grievances, originating in a cause already alluded to—the incursion of a party of young men who were exploring the country armed with rifles, and other weapons of destruction, and who had already shown as little regard for the lives of the human inhabitants of those wilds, as for the birds and beasts which happened to fall in their way.

A great amount of excitement very naturally prevailed amongst the people, and it threatened to rise to such a height as entirely to destroy the solemnity of the last rites which Seymour had determined himself to perform over the remains of his departed friend. Something must be done, either to get rid of these tumultuous people, or to awe them into silence. Under this difficulty, he found a valuable assistant in the boy who had been often the companion of the missionary, and who proposed to Seymour that he should address the people around the grave of their mutual friend.

For this purpose preparations were speedily made, many of the discontented and complaining party lending their assistance in erecting a rude kind of tent, under which the young missionary, as they called him, was to stand. The grave, too, was dug by willing hands, and not a few dark faces, with their hard-worn features, bent over it with tears; for the very meekness

and simplicity of the old man, with his calm patience, and ever-loving spirit, had won a place for him in hearts whose natural selfishness would scarcely seem to have left room for any other feeling.

With the strangeness of this scene, and the new courage which seemed to fill his soul, and animate his whole being with a new life, Seymour felt almost like one inspired. He forgot himself—forgot all danger—all fear—everything but the holy mission to which it seemed almost as if he had been dedicated by a power unseen, whose mandate it was not possible for him to disobey. But he had no wish to escape. The path which lay open before him, and it looked as if it was the only one, might be rough and rude, but he felt no shrinking as he prepared to tread its thorns. There was but one thing to be done—to ask for the guidance and support of Him who had placed him there, and to rely upon that alone.

Gradually, as Seymour prepared to speak, a degree of quietness began to spread around the assembly. The boy performed the office of interpreter; but in that motley group, there were many to whom the words of the speaker were neither strange, nor new,—many, who in more senses than one, were stragglers from the camp—off-shoots from society—and who, in their early associations had been familiar with English speech and habits. To these the spectacle of a young man like Seymour, pale, but animated with the fervour of his own emotions—strong in the might and the power of the truths he was proclaiming; yet physically feeble, and so delicate that he looked almost like a spiritual existence rather than a man—to them the appearance and the language of Seymour, so much more eloquent and refined than his aged predecessor, possessed a strange but deep interest, reminding them in a vague shadowy manner of many early impressions, and associations with parents, friends, and homes long lost to them; and it was especially to these that the appeals to natural feeling, which the speaker knew so well how to make, came with a force, and a tenderness, so overpowering, that everything seemed to be forgotten in the impressive solemnity of that exciting moment.

It was indeed a scene of strange wild interest by which Seymour was surrounded; but he thought little of the scene as such. To his highly-wrought feelings they were souls, not men who stood before him; and he spoke as if they were there for an eternity of happiness or misery—for life or for death.

Never before had such deep fervour filled his soul, and animated his whole being. He would not, at that moment, have feared an armed host—to the stake or the scaffold, if need had been, he would have walked unflinching. But though he feared not, nor could easily at that moment have been made to fear, danger was nearer to him than he thought.

For some time Seymour had gone on addressing the motley crowd without interruption. Whether from the musical tones of his voice, or the novelty of his mode of speech; or whether, in reality the lawless nature of the strange beings he addressed was softened by his eloquent appeals, a general attention marked the features of those around him; while all eyes were intently fixed upon his beautiful countenance, as if they read there a language even more intelligible than his words.

But, while so many eyes were directed towards him, Seymour's looked indiscriminately upon the different countenances of his audience without distinguishing any one from the rest; or, if he did, he had no thoughts to spare for so trivial a circumstance as that of noting human faces. Besides which, the evening was closing fast around, and already the shadows within the tent were beginning to render all objects less distinguishable. Seymour spoke better, at least more easily to himself, when this was the case. He ventured further, and threw himself more entirely into the hearts and feelings of his audience. Notwithstanding all the effort he was making, however, and his deep absorption in the theme of his discourse, Seymour could not resist the conviction that there were stealthy steps treading very near him about the outside of the tent, and once or twice the idea of surprise from some armed or malignant party flashed across his mind with no very pleasing associations. But the idea soon passed away again; and if he was to die—to die that night, alone, and unpro-

ected, he thought he could never lay down his head more peacefully, even beneath the stroke of the assassin.

In vain did the speaker endeavour to dismiss from his mind all apprehension that a stealthy step was near him, or that some attentive ear was listening to his address, beyond the circle of the audience, over whom the shades of evening were now so thickly gathering, that scarcely could one dusky sun-burnt countenance be distinguished from another.

At last, it was necessary for Seymour to pause. The party, who for some time had listened without interruption, began to drop off one by one, all preparing to depart their several ways. There was a general confusion which lasted for some time, during which Seymour rested his exhausted frame against the stem of a tree, which on one side had formed a support for the rude tent. While reclining, unnoticed in this position, he was startled by the grasp of a hand upon his shoulder, and far more so, by the sound of his own name, whispered in tones of familiar recognition. "Seymour," said the voice, "come out with me. I am Philip—your brother Philip."

The strength by which Seymour had been sustained seemed all to fail him now. A violent trembling seized his frame, so that he could not, for some time, comply with this strange summons. It was as if a voice from the dead had spoken to him; and yet the hand was warm, the grasp powerful. They were, in all respects, like the hand and the grasp of his brother. Seymour had reason to believe that Philip had followed pretty closely the course of his own wanderings, and was, at that very time, not far distant. But why was there mystery—secrecy in his brother's recognition? Why had he not come forward like a man, presenting himself before those people, in a form more calculated to afford protection to him, a helpless, unarmed man, who had no means of personal defence, should any assault be made? Why did Philip not come forward, and act the part of a brother, as well as speak in the language of one?

The mystery was soon unravelled—too soon; for, as Seymour walked with his brother that night, under the shelter of a deep forest, with the light of a cloudless moon

glancing fitfully through the branches, he learned strange tidings—things that sometimes sent the hot blood flushing to his cheeks, and then seemed almost to freeze the same life-current with horror.

Philip Clifton was a murderer. It is true, he had only fired in self-defence, upon a party by whom he was pursued; but he and his companions had been the first aggressors; "And when I came up to the spot where the man fell," said Philip, "I found he was an European—his skin as white as mine—most probably a convict who had escaped; but originally a fellow-countryman of my own—there can be no doubt about that."

This circumstance, though in reality of little consequence to the cruelty or injustice of the deed, affected Philip so deeply, that he formed the determination of escaping from his friends, who were only some late companions of his voyage, and seeking some remote part of the country, where he might begin life afresh upon a totally different plan. Philip had talked of making this new beginning before; but he was in earnest now. The time had at last come for him to pause, and think. With the blood of a fellow being on his hands, he could no longer withstand the conviction, that he who sets out on a career of self-indulgence, regardless of any law but inclination, will in time be left to the sole government of his own passions, and will thus find himself driven along to the commission of crimes, the most abhorrent to his own natural feelings.

Nothing less than this frightful catastrophe would, in all probability, have brought Philip Clifton to feel as he now expressed himself to his brother. Seymour was deeply affected by what he heard; and yet, upon the whole, he felt almost more joy than sorrow, so far as his brother's state of mind was affected by what had taken place.

On listening to a full account of Philip's sad story, Seymour derived great satisfaction from the conviction that his brother would not be considered guilty in any court of law. He was, however, not the less exposed to danger from those whose rights he had so recklessly invaded; and for this reason the two brothers deemed it safest to escape, as secretly as possible, and with all speed, from that part of the country.



CHAPTER XXVI.

Now we see with clearer eyes
Through life's many mysteries;
Now mistakes are rectified,
And rebuked is human pride.

It was very natural that the two brothers should wish not to separate again; and as they journeyed together that night, they formed plans for the future, based upon the necessity which each felt for the society and companionship of the other. What if it should so turn out, that at last these two men, who in early youth could scarcely maintain an ordinary amount of cordial intercourse, should become absolutely necessary to each other? What if each should supply what the other wanted; and thus, as two Christian travellers, should journey along the way of life, taking sweet counsel together? the one performing wonders of enterprise, and manly daring, yet ever guided by the gentler spirit and milder influence of his brother; the other pursuing his more spiritual vocation with greater energy and success, from the happy circumstance of being supported by the commanding influence of a more practical and determined nature than his own.

Could the mother who had watched

over their childhood have seen her two noble sons thus situated, she might probably have remembered her early dream; and she might also have acknowledged her mistake in the early destination of her boys; but Mrs. Clifton, in her far off home, knew only that her sons wrote home the most encouraging and cheerful letters, not unaccompanied at times by tokens of a more substantial nature.

These, however, came not for some time. A long season of trial had to be endured, as may well be supposed; during which the two brothers mutually supported each other. But Philip had resources of which he never knew the value until a serious determination to make his own honourable way, took possession of his mind. Then he bethought himself of all that his elder brother had done for him, to render his course in the new colony more prosperous and easy to him. He had introductions of great importance, and with these, and the pecuniary means which Robert had so generously supplied, he soon made a very respectable commencement as a man of business. Seymour, too, found by the lessons which necessity had taught him, that in taking an active part in the prac-

tical duties upon which both were dependent, it was not necessary that he should neglect the higher vocation to which he felt more disposed to devote himself.

But Seymour was a real Christian now; consequently, he took his duties as they came. In the first place, he must live, and he must live respectably—independently, if he could, or how dared he hope to exercise any good influence upon others? He, therefore, communicated frankly with the friend who had so generously provided for the aged missionary; and, after telling him that, with youth and health in his favour, he considered himself bound to provide, or to assist his brother in providing for his own maintenance, he took a respectful and grateful leave of the family, and settled with Philip, in a part of the country where the sad affray, which had first led to their meeting, had never been heard of.

In this manner, and with much help and much good counsel from his brother, Philip Clifton, came in time to be recognised as a prosperous and influential man; while Seymour was not the less remarkable, though pursuing an unostentatious course, for the earnest and unstinting zeal with which he devoted himself to the temporal and eternal welfare of some of the most neglected of his fellow beings.

In comparing the situation of these brothers with what had been placed before them in early life, it would, in all probability, be said of them that they had suffered the loss of bright prospects of hopeful promise. But if they were each in their element now, of what importance was the mere worldly estimate of their success or their happiness? if they were both fulfilling the highest destiny of which they were capable, of what importance was the distance of the duties of that destiny from the familiar associations of early years?

But we must no longer dwell upon this portion of our history. Brighter scenes of domestic comfort are yet in store for other members of the Clifton family, for all are working their way into the separate paths for which they were originally fitted, not the worse in heart and character, for the chastening of hard discipline, or the rude tossing of unpropitious gales

We have already said that Catherine Clifton was urgently entreated by Helen to fly to her aid, and she lost no time in obeying the summons. She found her sister in great need of that assistance and support which no one knew better than Catherine how to supply. Helen was surrounded by a scene of alarm and distress, for which the previous habits of her studious life had in no respect prepared her; and, wanting the active principle upon which her younger sister seemed instinctively to rush instantly into what was actually to be done, she was in danger of sinking under her accumulating cares.

On the first appearance of the malady already alluded to, the mother of the family in which Helen was engaged, an extremely delicate lady, had been removed from the scene of danger; and the father, having fulfilled what he considered his first duty in placing his wife out of all chance of contagion, felt it scarcely necessary to return home himself. He was not negligent, however, in attending to the wants of his family. Nurses and attendants in vast variety were supplied; and as there had long ruled in the juvenile department, an experienced and motherly person, to whom all looked for the exercise of the great gift of care taking; and, as he said, in an unusually complimentary manner, when writing to the governess, she herself was so prudent and so judicious, that he felt himself as much—nay, indeed, more in the way of his duty, while watching over the interests of his family at a distance, because he could thus communicate with the mother respecting her children, and at the same time attend to various transactions connected with his own business.

The two sisters could not read these letters without an occasional smile, for, as Helen said, the gentleman had never found out her great prudence and judgment before; indeed he had always been the first to evince a kind of fidgety want of faith in all that she, or any person, except himself, either advised or attempted to carry out. "But never mind," said Catherine, "we shall have it all to ourselves, and get on, I dare say, a great deal better than if the heads of the family were here. What kind of doctor have you, Helen?"

Helen replied that he was young, but she thought him very clever.

"Young, is he?" said Catherine, "I don't like that. I wish he was an old man—somebody like a father."

"Oh! you won't mind," said Helen, "when you see him. He is grave as a grandfather, and goes about what he has to do as if he had the experience of fifty years. I like him though, for all that, and have found him hitherto more like a friend than a stranger."

"Do you think I shall like him?" asked Catherine.

"Oh! yes, I am sure you will;" replied her sister; "but you need not try to make jokes with him, for you will not be able to elicit so much as a smile."

But Catherine did make the doctor smile, and laugh too; for as yet there was no symptom of a dangerous nature amongst the children, and Mr. Longford, for that was the doctor's name, was both amused and delighted with the prompt and business-like manner in which Catherine managed everything she undertook, accomplishing, in a lively and cheerful manner, and often with a good deal of humour and drollery, about twice the amount of real business which any other person would have got through within the same length of time.

But the aspect of affairs in the sick family did not long wear this smiling character. One of the younger children was more seriously affected than had been anticipated. One of the servants, also, sickened with the same disease, for it was an infectious fever; and then it was, that Catherine's more serious feelings, as well as her more useful qualifications, were called prominently into exercise. Indeed, she had learned much in her late experience, and though delighted to be once more near her sister, even in the midst of scenes of trial, and happy to make those trials more easy by sharing them with her, she had grown more sensible of late to the value of life in its highest purposes and duties; and hence her consideration of death had also become more deep and solemn.

It was a time for the most friendly and intimate communion amongst those who were concerned in the care of the sick family. The doctor became a friend,

rather than a mere medical attendant. His advice was listened to, and his approaching step was hailed, by the two sisters, with feelings which would seem scarcely to belong to so short an acquaintance, only that there are circumstances in life which crowd into a short period as much interchange of real feeling as would, in ordinary cases, require the lapse of years to ripen into friendship.

For a long time it was natural that the two sisters should think little on any subject beyond the pressing cares which occupied so much of their attention; but, as the most alarming symptoms began to abate, they found more leisure for social intercourse, and then it was that the society of Mr. Longford afforded them a different kind of pleasure from that which they had sought and found in their moments of anxious and careful watching. Never, perhaps, had two individuals, not relatively connected, devoted themselves with more unsparing solicitude to the interests of any family than the sisters did to this. How far their disinterested services were appreciated, formed no item in their calculations. It was not to be praised or rewarded, that they gave up every personal comfort, and endured an amount of fatigue and privation, which, but for the determined interference of their newly-discovered friend, might have defeated their own purposes by depriving them of the power to do more; for it is not pretended that the sisters, without his judicious counsel, would have exercised the same prudent care on their own behalf, which they knew so well how to exercise for others. It is true that each wished to spare the other, but it was only by redoubling her own efforts that such a wish was attempted to be carried out; but Mr. Longford watched carefully over both; and with a peculiar quickness of preception, he detected every symptom, even the most delicate, which betrayed that Nature was too severely taxed.

With her wonted impetuosity of feeling, Catherine was ever the foremost to propose that Helen should be spared; and she would even point out the beauty and the delicacy of her sister in terms of the warmest admiration, as reasons why she herself should take a double share of duty, while her sister enjoyed more rest:

A peculiar smile would sometimes play about the grave features of the doctor, as Catherine urged this plea; and, sometimes he would answer her arguments by asking, whether plain people had naturally more strength than others; or whether beauty was not as capable of self-preservation as its opposite. Catherine was surprised that any man should speak in this cold way when her sister's matchless charms were the subject of discussion; nor was her surprise at all diminished, when, after many hints which she failed to interpret, it was at last made plain to her, beyond all mistake, that notwithstanding all the beauty of her sister, and her acknowledged superiority of talent, and of general acquirements, Catherine herself was a few shades more attractive in the eyes of Mr. Longford; and that, as a fire-side companion, he was disposed to give her the preference over all other women.

"A man of decidedly bad taste," Catherine pronounced Mr. Longford to be. She had thought better things of him, she said, and wondered how it came about that one, who was so wise on all other subjects, should be so deficient in wisdom on this.

The charge of want of taste being cheerfully submitted to, Catherine found no further cause of quarrel with her friend. Indeed, he was a grave, earnest, thoughtful man, who would scarcely have afforded to an enemy, if he had one, any sufficient ground for the exercise either of ridicule or of malevolence.

"How strange!" everybody said, when they heard of the intimacy which grew out of this acquaintance, that so sedate a man as Mr. Longford should have chosen the younger sister, when Helen and he were so much alike. They did not consider that the very frankness and impetuosity of Catherine's nature, with her playful and untiring spirits, were exactly what Mr. Longford wanted in the companion of his home. He had himself the learning, the patience, the deep research, the vast information, and the calm prudence of a self-governed and judicious man. But he loved the bright smile, the hearty welcome, the quick response; nay, even when he needed it, the warm, gushing tear. He knew the full value of all

that was most charming in Catherine's character; and to him it was doubly valuable, because he had, within his own heart, all those warm responsive feelings to which he often struggled in vain to give appropriate utterance. Thus Catherine was to him far more than beautiful. She was like a bright and animated personification of his own inner being; and, just as the heart delights in music, because in sweet humorous strains it speaks of what that heart has felt, but could not utter; so Catherine was the music of his life, echoing all its by-gone melodies, and rousing into present truth and expression, all the tenderest, as well as the most ennobling emotions, of which his nature was capable.

Mrs. Clifton was beyond measure astonished, when the tidings reached her, that Catherine, not Helen, had had the opportunity of accepting or refusing Mr. Longford's hand. For some time she persisted in believing it was a mistake, and that the name of the younger sister had been substituted for the older. "It could not be," she said. "Kitty, poor child! was going to make her own way in the world, and must take a situation so soon as things were a little more settled."

Kitty herself was thinking of taking a situation, though of a somewhat different description; and so soon as she could make up her mind to believe that she was really beloved by a sensible man, the whole matter was laid before her mother in such a form as left not the possibility of doubt respecting the object of Mr. Longford's choice.

Robert Clifton, when he heard the news, declared it was very slippery and mean of his sister Kitty, who had promised to be Mary's bridesmaid, to scheme to be married first. And she, the youngest of the whole family, too! There was a general protestation against it, and yet all were pleased, for they knew well what an excellent wife their sister would make. Nor was their pleasure lessened by a more intimate acquaintance with Mr. Longford, who needed only the cheerful influence of a character like Catherine's to draw him out into the most interesting companionship, and even to convert him at times into a humorous and entertaining man.

With these pleasant prospects brightening before her, it was impossible for Catherine to consent that Helen should be separated from the family circle. Her duties as a governess could scarcely be resumed for some time to come, owing to the continued weakness and indisposition of the children, who had been exclusively under her care. In fact, the whole family required the attention of a nurse more than an instructress, and Catherine insisted upon her sister returning home with her. Change of air and scene was quite as necessary for Helen, as for any of those over whom she had so carefully watched. Besides which, the great events which were likely so soon to take place in her own family, rendered the presence of Helen more than ever desirable at home. It was, therefore, finally arranged, that, until the time of her brother's marriage with Miss Maitland, which was to take place about three months later than Catherine's, Helen should remain at home.

And a happy time it was to all parties while these preparations were going on. One thing only was felt as a painful privation. This was the absence of the two other brothers. "If only Seymour and Philip were here!" was a frequent expression with every member of the Clifton family. They did not know how the two brothers were working out the fitting purpose of their lives, nor how much they would have lost had they been called away from the stern discipline which both were enduring, to be nursed again in the lap of luxury and repose, before they had fully learned the great lessons which they were at one time so slow to understand.

Happy marriages, however pleasant in themselves, and however absorbing in the interest which they diffuse around the parties concerned, are not the best subjects for description. We will, therefore, spare the reader all that might be said on the subject of the two great occasions on which the Clifton family were, in this manner; enabled to rejoice together; for scarcely had the excitement of one event subsided, before the other had to be prepared for with equal interest.

Helen found a new field for her talents here; and if she was less apt than her younger sister in making such arrange-

ments as the first interesting occasion demanded, she had learned so much in her new lesson, and was so ably seconded by Catherine, that nothing could exceed the elegance of the simple but tasteful display which was made on the marriage of the oldest son.

"We shall be more than perfect when your turn comes," said Catherine to her sister. But Helen's turn was far off in the future; and, in the meantime, she found so much to occupy her in watching the declining years of her parents, that, between them and the other members of her family, in whose homes she was ever in great demand, she found no time to pursue her original plan, of making herself independent, by fulfilling the duties of a governess. Independent she could not be, for there were so many determined that she should add to their happiness, and derive much of her own from them; so the learned lady submitted with the best grace in the world, to be the lady of the family—the welcome visitor at every home, and the beloved and treasured of all hearts.

Robert Clifton, in pursuing his new occupation, found that he had much to learn; but such was the earnest assiduity with which he applied himself to his work, that, in addition to the pleasure he felt in being congenially situated, he rapidly attained a higher position in his profession, than could have been the case, had not the natural bent of his mind led him so decidedly in that direction. As with all persons so situated, trouble scarcely was trouble to him any longer; and difficulty only gave zest to enterprise. It was not now with him, as formerly, in the dark city counting-house, that his spirit sank under imaginary, as well as real evils. He had hope now in everything which it was right to do—belief in all that human power could accomplish, provided only the work was worth doing, and necessary to be done. In fact, his whole nature seemed to become elevated by the efforts he was constantly making, and to prosper with his circumstances. He was *in his element*; and in that common-place and familiar expression, is comprehended a larger amount of physical and mental happiness, than those who use the words are in the habit of supposing. For want

of this, how many pine and shrivel, and grow weary of well-doing, when talent and energy—purpose and endeavour, might all have held out to a contented and cheerful old age.

One glimpse more at the Clifton family, after the lapse of years. Catherine is now the mother of—we dare not say how many hopeful and blooming children. Helen, still unmarried, dwells beneath the same roof, lending her ever ready aid in all sisterly services, and calming down, sometimes, by her quiet influence, the somewhat too vivacious spirits around her. It is true Catherine is an excellent manager: but who can tell how much of the intellectual atmosphere of the household may not be derived from the society of the still beautiful Helen, who, without the slightest touch of pedantry, or presumption, often so turns the conversation as to lead it away from things which might be too trivial, if allowed always to fill the foremost place. Catherine complains loudly that her husband and sister are so wise, and learned, as scarcely to breathe the same atmosphere, or exist upon the same food with herself; but it is very evident that she would be sorry to have them in any way different from what they are; and wherever either or both are to be found, and found at liberty to enjoy a moment's pleasant chat, Catherine is sure not to be far distant.

Seldom, indeed, could a happier little society be found, than that which formed this most congenial trio, unless when joined by Robert Clifton and his interesting wife, the happiness of all was increased to a degree beyond the ordinary enjoyment of social life. There was still the old want, for the two distant brothers came not; but as years rolled on, their absence was thought of with less poignant regret.

Long letters came frequently from the colony, and no slight share of the affection of early years was discoverable in the closely-written pages. These were chiefly from Seymour; for Philip was a busy man, his life so full of enterprise—his undertakings, of whatever kind they might be, so eminently practical, that to sit down and write seemed an occupation always too trifling for him; and he contented himself with long messages through

the channel which Seymour's frequent epistles afforded.

In reading these letters, nothing delighted the family at home more than the perfect union and attachment of the two brothers. The manner in which Philip was always spoken of by Seymour affected the sisters deeply. But they knew not all—they knew not how humble and subdued the giant spirit of their youngest brother had become—how one dark deed of his past life still threw its shadowy pall upon his path; how the strong man sometimes bowed his knee in secret to implore that pardon which he would have deemed the sacrifice of a whole life too cheap to purchase.

His conscience once enlightened, his sense of right aroused, his feelings of kindness and benevolence, and his conviction of the responsibility of man for his brother once brought strongly and clearly before his view, Philip was able to see the whole of his past life as it really was, but as he never could have seen it without this awakening of his spiritual perceptions. Ah! in that past life what a grievous loss there was—what a cruelty had been inflicted—what a glory had departed! Heaven had received what human selfishness had driven out, therefore the promised inheritance was only entered upon a little earlier, before the beauty of youth had faded, or the worn out frame had sunk by slow decay. God had been very merciful to take to himself his beloved child before the tears of earthly sorrow had time to wear for themselves deep furrows on her cheek. For her it was well. But Philip Clifton never could forget—it was not right that he should, how it might have been with him. Years made no difference in this respect. He was never a deep thinker. Nature was not eradicated in his case more than in others. He had to the last a tendency to be a self-indulgent man. But this tendency only led him to do his own way, to follow out his own purposes, and to adopt the plans which pleased him best in things of minor importance, and where his purposes were neither opposed to the will of God, nor interfered with the happiness of others. Whenever he saw that such consequences would ensue, Philip hesitated—looked back, and checked his impetuous will.

Yes, he looked back into the bygone summer days of his youth ; and in the green lanes and flowery gardens of his native country, beneath the spreading elm tree's shade, or by the wimpling streamlet, there he beheld again such visions as might, he thought, have wooed the most eager victim of unlawful pleasure back into the paths of purity and peace. But in his case all had failed—failed for this world, at least, and he must journey on alone, a guilty man, with the brand upon his brow, but still not an outcast—not forsaken—not left to the promptings of his own selfishness, nor the guidance of his own passions. No, even with him there was a place for repentance, and though he found it with tears, yet he found also that in the same way he had entered upon the possession of a peace which surpassed all that he could have imagined or desired of earthly happiness without it.

Seymour Clifton had nothing to prevent his return to his native country, and in the course of years the once pale youth came back with sunburnt cheek, and hair a little sprinkled here and there with silvery threads. Who could have imagined such a change in one whose delicacy of face and person was scarcely surpassed by that native delicacy of mind which had made the accustomed hardships of life so much more painful to him than to others? Who could have imagined such a change? And yet there was the same smile ever. His friends thought it sweeter now than in the days of his youthful beauty.

Seymour had not come back to trouble anyone, or to excite dubious calculations about his means of living. He had waited until a successful speculation had placed himself and his brother in the possession of means more ample than he had ever expected to enjoy ; and he came in consequence to see in what way he could best assist his parents, or any other members of his own family who might benefit by the use of a little addition to their means. He found, however, no want—no absence of the most liberal enjoyment in any of the pleasant

homes in which he was so welcome a visitor ; and the bachelor uncle was obliged to content himself with bestowing, upon increased numbers, those elegant and well-chosen presents which it had always been a luxury to him to give.

This, however, did not long continue to be enough for Seymour Clifton to do. He had a higher call in life than to recline in the lap of indulgence, and to give only where it was a pleasure to bestow. With more abundant means, Seymour knew well that his responsibilities were widely extended. If he did not advise or exhort his fellow beings in public, he sought them out in private, and devoted himself to their best interests with no less assiduity and zeal. Such men are soon known, and eagerly sought after. Thus Seymour Clifton was not long in finding a sphere of usefulness in all respects as extensive as his means ; and of all who had suffered from the mother's mistake, he was in the end the most useful, the happiest, and the best beloved.

This simple history of the Clifton family, and of the mistakes which involved them in so much suffering, has not been written to blame, but to encourage. Mistakes will occur, so long as we look upon human life with partial and imperfect vision. Much, we believe, might be done in the way of clearing that vision ; but even where this is not the case, much may be done to render the consequences of our mistakes less calamitous than they often are.

There is no labour in life, there can be none, so hard as that which is performed without a natural fitness in the labourer for the work which he has to do ; neither is there any which so generally proves unsuccessful. On the other hand, there scarcely seems any limit to the power of those who live and work in their proper element. Whatever our friends can do towards placing us in these circumstances partakes of the nature of the highest benevolence, as well as assimilates to the profoundest wisdom. This then is the true science of life, both as regards ourselves and others.

THE END.



